

No. 41

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ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S TOUCH-DOWN

OR A HARD NUT TO CRACK AT HIGHLAND



As Jack, hugging the pigskin to his chest, cleared that scrambling mob, he dragged a couple of the philistinos along over the line.

Publishers' Note. "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

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No. 41.

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JACK LIGHTFOOT'S TOUCH-DOWN;

(OR)

A Hard Nut to Crack at Highland.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

Jack Lightfoot, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

Tom Lightfoot, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival, though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

Ned Skeen, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

Nat Kimball, an undersized fellow, whose hobby was the study of *jiu-jitsu*, and who had a dread of germs.

Lafe Lampton, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

Phil Kirtland, a rival of Jack's, but who is not averse to winning a little glory at times, even if he has to share it with Lightfoot.

Jubal Marlin, one of Jack's friends, with a Yankee love for making money.

Katie Strawn and **Nellie Conner**, two Cranford girls, friends of Jack.

Farmer Littlefield, who believed boys should work while they were not sleeping.

Mrs. Littlefield, his wife, who shared his views.

Lee Sheldon, captain of the Highland "Eleven," and a boy after Jack's heart.

Weary Watson, a tramp who was more than he seemed to be.

CHAPTER I.

JUBAL MARLIN AS A HYPNOTIST.

Farmer Littlefield was out by the barn, in a furious temper, looking up the road in the direction of Highland, in the gathering gloom of approaching night.

Mrs. Littlefield, his wife, was in the house, bustling from the kitchen into the dining room—which was also the sitting room—and throwing a word now and then to the young fellow who sat there in the dining room, waiting.

This young fellow was Jubal Marlin, and he was waiting for Lee Sheldon, who was, just then, Littlefield's hired man, or, more correctly, chore boy.

The cows had come up to the pasture bars and had been turned into the barn by the farmer, but Sheldon, whose duty it was to milk them and do sundry other things, had not appeared. He had gone to Highland early in the day, to attend the high school, and had

promised to be back early; and here night was at hand, and the work waiting, and he had not yet come.

"It's that caonfounded football that's keepin' him!" fumed Littlefield. "He ain't got no sense since they begun it. What a lot o' youngsters want tew go tew wastin' their time kickin' an old ball raound a field fer, gits me. If they want tew work, there's plenty of it to do. It's harder'n choppin' wood, an' when you're choppin' wood you're doin' somethin' useful. I vum, when he comes I'll give it to him!"

Mrs. Littlefield was not outwardly fuming, like her husband, but inwardly she was as much stirred up as he. "Football" was as big a nuisance, and as useless, in her estimation, as in his.

Another thing that had made this form of sport so distasteful to the farmer and his wife was that a son of theirs had almost gone daffy on the subject.

In a rage, they had turned him out into the world to shift for himself. Hence, the subject was a particularly sore one.

Jubal sat for a long time, twisting uneasily in his hard-backed chair, thinking of certain plans he had "up his sleeve"—plans which had brought him there that afternoon, and which had made him seek young Sheldon's acquaintance in the first place.

Sheldon was the new captain of the Highland football eleven, and was a student at the Highland high school, working at Littlefield's mornings and evenings, and in his extra time, for his board.

After a while Jubal began to give closer attention to the farmer's wife, as she bustled to and fro preparing the evening meal.

At last he took a queer contrivance out of his pocket.

It was a rude imitation, made himself, of the metal wheel, or whirling disc, which he had seen Reel Snodgrass use when trying to hypnotize a subject.

At various times Jubal had talked with Reel of hypnotism, trying to extract from him some information that he could utilize. Always Reel had put him off without disclosing anything of value.

Jubal had tackled Jack Lightfoot in the same way, with as small success.

Now he was starting out on his own account.

So he had made this copy of the whirling disc used by Reel, and had brought it with him to Littlefield's, being determined to try it on Lee Sheldon, the captain of the Highland eleven.

"Great codfish!" Jubal had said, speaking to Reel about it, "if a feller c'd hypnotize the captain of the opposin' eleven, and git him so's he'd tangle hisself

and his team all up, we could win the game without half tryin'. Why don't yeou do it? If I could do hypnotin', by jacks, I would!"

It occurred now to Jubal that, while he was waiting for Lee Sheldon, he might do a bit of practicing on Mrs. Littlefield. It would help him, he fancied, when he came to try it on Sheldon.

So he held up the shining disc, affixed to the end of a rod, or handle, and set it to whirling before the eyes of the farmer's wife, as she potted into the room and out again.

If the Cranford fellows could have seen Jubal thus engaged, it would have been as good as a show.

"J'ever see anything like this?" he asked, as he whirled it.

"Never," she said; then sniffed as she looked at it, and passed on.

After that, whenever Mrs. Littlefield passed him, he thrust up the disc, giving it a spin, and squinted his eyes and wrinkled his face in the most amusing manner, trying thus to get that queer, staring look of the eyes he had remembered in Reel Snodgrass.

Once or twice she came quite near him. When she did so, he put out his hand, trying to make hypnotic passes before her face.

She began to "take notice" after a little, and once stared hard at him.

Jubal thought the spell was beginning to work, and he waved his hand again in hypnotic passes.

She retreated suddenly, and he heard her saying something to herself out in the kitchen.

"By hemlock, come nigh gittin' her that time!" he muttered. "If she comes up to me ag'in that way, I believe I'll have her."

She came into the room again, and close up to him, staring, and once more he made hypnotic passes.

"Funny thing abaout this hypnotism," he muttered. "The person yeou're gittin' under yeou're infloence jist natherly can't stay away frum it. It's sort o' like a magnet an' a piece of steel—the steel's baound tew go tew the magnet."

She came in again and passed out, and at each time he tried his wheel, staring and wrinkling his face and moving his eyebrows up and down, and making those slow passes with his right hand.

She was laying the tablecloth and putting some dishes on the table.

"By jacks, I'm workin' her! And if I can work her, I can work this here captain of the Highland eleven; and if I can git him hypn'tized, we'll not only

win the game to-morrer, but we'll have whole cayoodles of fun a-doin' it!"

When she came in again she had a large, empty dishpan in her hand.

Jubal began his passes once more, and she came straight toward him, staring and very red in the face.

"By hemlock, I'm gittin' her!"

When she came still closer, he moved his hand faster, staring and wrinkling his brows.

"It's workin'!" was his exultant thought. "An' if I can git her this easy, I'll git that football captain shore as shootin'."

Then she bent toward him, and, lifting the pan, she hit him over the head with it, almost driving his head through the bottom of the pan.

"Make faces at me, will ye, you consarned idjit?" she howled, smashing him over the head again with the pan. "Come to my haouse and set in my dinin' room an' go to makin' faces at me, do ye?" Whack! "Makin' fun of yer betters, be ye?" Crash! "Insultin' a lady!" Bang! "I'll teach ye some manners, seein' ye ain't got any!"

Whack! Bang! Smash! Crash!

She was laying about her in lively fashion, beating Jubal over the head; and when he sprang to his feet, with an overturning of the chair he had occupied, she drove him into a corner, and continued to "lay it on" good and hard.

"Because I'm a country woman, and you're from the town, you needn't think you can come an' set in my dinin' room an' make fun o' me! I'll beat yer ugly face off ye, so I will!"

Jubal made a desperate dive, and got by her and out of the corner.

The dishpan was still waving, and it showed a dent for every time it had struck Jubal's head.

His cap had been knocked off, and lay in the corner, and he feared to try to get it. So he stood by the outer door, toward which he had run, with an arm uplifted to shield his face. In his hand he still held the shining disc.

"It's a mistake!" he declared. "Yeou're mistook abaout this! I didn't——"

"Tell me I'm a liar, do ye? Didn't I see you settin' there makin' faces at me?"

She advanced toward him.

"But—but——" Jubal stuttered. "I wasn't thinkin' of insultin' yeou, be'gosh! I was jist—jist tryin' an experiment on ye."

He stood ready to dive through the doorway and seek safety in the yard.

"I—I been learnin' a trick lately, an' I was jist—jist tryin' it on ye. I didn't mean any harm by it."

Worse to Jubal than the beating and the sharp words was the discovery that his hypnotic trick had failed utterly, just when he had fancied it was working to perfection.

"Clear out of here, and don't never let me see your face ag'in!" she commanded, waving the dishpan. "Clear out! You don't git no supper in my house now, I tell ye! Clear out! Go back to town, where ye belong, and learn some manners!"

Jubal stood in the doorway, hesitating.

He did not want to clear out—he wanted to stay and meet young Sheldon, and try that trick on him. That it had failed in this case was not an indication that it would fail in his, he argued.

"Clear out!" she repeated, "er I'll call my husband and have him throw ye out. Settin' in my dinin' room makin' faces at me, jist because I'm a little old woman and wrinkled, tryin' to make wrinkles on yer forehead jist like mine air! I never seen a town boy yit that had any manners. Clear out o' here, fer I don't want to see ye ag'in."

Jubal saw that he would have to go, and that if she summoned her crochety husband, in his present temper, there might be "something doing" that would be very disagreeable.

"I'll go, if you'll give me my cap."

She kicked it toward him, and Jubal picked it up hastily, expecting to feel the dishpan again as he did so.

"But I'm comin' back ag'in," he added, as he stepped down to the doorstep. "I'm wantin' to see Mr. Sheldon, and——"

"Mister Sheldon! He ain't no more a mister than I be. He's another crazy kid like you; and when he gits back here, he'll see some fun! Them caows ain't milked yit, ner fed, and there ain't anything done, and——" She stopped, breathless. "He's jist like you an' the other no-'count trash he's taken to runnin' with. An' he'll git it when he comes home."

Farmer Littlefield's heavy boots were heard thudding in the yard, and Jubal backed further from the door.

"I wish, pa, you'd whale the Old Harry out'n that boy!" the woman screamed, when she heard her husband's footsteps. "He's been makin' faces at me, right in my own dinin' room, and insultin' me dreadful!"

Farmer Jason Littlefield picked up a heavy horse-

whip that hung on a nail outside the door, near his hand, and with it made a rush at Jubal.

Then Jubal fled incontinently out into the night, for darkness had gathered.

"Such luck!" he grumbled. "Jist when I thought the trick was workin', it went back on me. I mis-cued it somehaow. But I'll work it on Lee Sheldon yit, even if I did fail this time. By cracky, I've got tew! We've got tew win that game to-morrow. And think of the dead loads of fun it'd be, besides, if the captain of the oppersition should git all tangled up, and say one thing when all the time he was meanin' another. Oh, I got tew work that trick yit somehaow! I'll come back ag'in bimeby, and I'll work it by some hook er crook. By hemlock, I've got tew!"

Then Jubal walked along the road, expecting to meet Lee Sheldon as the latter made his way homeward from the town.

CHAPTER II.

LEE SHELDON.

Lee Sheldon was a new acquisition to the athletic world of Highland.

He had come to the place at the beginning of the school term, for the purpose of entering the high school. He was an orphan boy, and had no money, but he had ambition, and was not afraid to work. He wanted an education, and he was resolved to work his way through the high school, and then through college. Many another boy has done the same, and he was sure that what others had done he could do.

The first place that opened to him was Farmer Littlefield's, and he accepted it, agreeing to do "chores" for his board through the winter.

He had found, however, as several who had tried the place had found before him, that Littlefield was a hard man to get along with.

Jason Littlefield's idea of what a young fellow should do for his board was that he ought to rush home as soon as school was dismissed, and work until nine o'clock at night; rise at four in the morning, and work till school time again; and do a man's work in the woods at chopping every Saturday, with enough general and miscellaneous work on Sunday to occupy any two men.

For a time Sheldon tried hard to fill these requirements. But even then he had not been able to get on with Littlefield, who had a fiery temper, and could never be satisfied, no matter how well any piece of work was done.

When the Highland eleven was organized, with practice playing at the noon hour and after school, Lee Sheldon showed such a thorough knowledge of the game, and was so fine a player, that he was chosen captain of the eleven, even though he was a comparative stranger in the town.

There was a certain cheery way with him that won friends, in addition to the fact that he was the best football player in Highland.

He played with the eleven in practice work each noon, and several times lately he had remained for a short game after school hours, thinking by harder work and remaining up later at night he could do the work thus neglected, and please Littlefield.

Then Littlefield ordered him not to play football after school, and objected to him playing it even during the noon hour, though, as young Sheldon did not come home at noon, what difference his playing could make to the farmer was not clear.

But his delay on the afternoon in which this story opens was not because he had tarried at the school grounds for football practice, but because he had assisted a boy who had been injured by a runaway horse.

The horse had dashed toward the schoolhouse just as school was dismissed, with the boy hanging to the lines and unable to control the animal. Sheldon had leaped out into the road, clutched the bits, and brought the horse to a stop with difficulty but while he was doing that, the wheel of the spring wagon had struck a rock, and the jolt had shot the boy out on his head, severely injuring him.

As this boy was a neighbor of Littlefield's, though living on a different road, Sheldon had agreed to take him home in the spring wagon.

On his arrival at the boy's home, the demands of the frantic mother had caused Sheldon to turn back with the spring wagon for Highland, to get a doctor.

This was the cause of the long delay. He had secured the doctor, and had done some other little things which the distracted mother desired, after his return to the place with the physician.

Jubal did not meet him, for Lee Sheldon returned to Littlefield's by crosslots, instead of coming down the road from town.

But when Jubal was still no more than a half a mile from the house, Sheldon put in an appearance there, finding both Mr. and Mrs. Littlefield in a towering rage.

The first person he saw was Littlefield, who ap-

peared from the outside with that horsewhip in his hand.

"What's the meanin' of this 'ere?" he bellowed, fiercely, drawing the whiplash through his left hand, as if making ready to use it.

Littlefield's tone was so harsh and his manner so threatening that Sheldon's face flushed a deep red.

Though he was not a boy to be talked to in that manner, he began an explanation, which was cut short.

"Yer a liar! You was stoppin' there in taown playin' football. Them caows ain't milked yit——"

"And you don't git no supper till they air milked!" cut in the farmer's wife.

"Sich laziness I never see!" said Littlefield. "Here them caows has been sense before dark, an' ain't milked yit. And they ain't fed, ner the horses ain't. An'——"

"An' the water an' the wood ain't been brought in!" said Mrs. Littlefield.

Lee Sheldon looked at the whip which Jason Littlefield was swishing through his hand.

"What are you going to do with that?" he asked.

"I'm goin' to lay it over yer ornery back!" said Littlefield, advancing into the room. "There ain't goin' to be no more of this football bizness raound here now, I tell ye! When I hire a feller to do work fer me, he's goin' to do it, er I'll know why! What air we feedin' you fer, anyhow? To play football?"

"I intended to explain to you!"

"That's what you been doin' before; but explainin' ain't workin', an' it's work I'm wantin' to see."

"Ain't I been settin' good meals before ye?" Mrs. Littlefield snapped.

"I think I've earned them," said Sheldon, coolly.

Although angered, he felt almost amused by the foolish rage of these people. They were so narrow-minded and altogether so unreasonable.

"If you stand in the door, how am I to go out and milk those cows?" he asked of Littlefield.

Unavoidably, he spoke lightly, and in what Littlefield thought a mocking tone, though Sheldon did not intend it so.

Yet he could afford to smile at these old skinflints; for before he had come away from the home of the farmer whose boy he had assisted, he had been there offered a place where he would have a better outlook on life, and the work to be performed would not be such a treadmill as he had found it here. Yes, he could afford even to smile.

What he considered Sheldon's tone of levity stung Littlefield to the quick. To his mind, this young fel-

low was making fun of him. So, with a cry of rage, he sprang at Sheldon and brought the heavy whip down across his shoulders with stinging force.

"Make fun o' me, will ye?" he howled.

"Jist like that other ongrateful wretch that was here awhile ago!" sputtered Mrs. Littlefield. "Boys ain't wuth shucks any more, except to make fun o' people."

"Don't strike me again!" said Sheldon, as the farmer drew the whip back for another blow.

"I'll cut the hide off'n your back!" screamed Littlefield.

"I'd advise you not to! I'm not a boy, understand. I'm almost a man grown."

Sheldon stood by the wall, trembling.

"You'd advise me not to, would ye?" howled Littlefield, in a rage. "Well, here you git it!"

The whip whistled through the air again.

Sheldon caught the lash, and the whip was jerked from the farmer's hands and shot across the room, striking the opposite wall with a thud.

"You can't cowhide me as if I were only a kid!" said Sheldon, angrily.

Sheldon's daring fairly took away the farmer's breath.

With a scream of rage, Mrs. Sheldon now ran into the kitchen, returning instantly with a pan of scalding hot water; while Littlefield sprang to pick up the heavy whip.

"I'll scald ye!" the woman yelled.

"And I'll cut the hide off'n your back by inches!" screamed Littlefield, regaining possession of the whip.

"And you don't git a bite of supper till that work's all done!" said the woman.

"You don't git none, even when it is done!" threatened Littlefield. "I'm the boss of this 'ere place, rec'lect!"

"You don't boss me any longer," Sheldon declared.

The farmer, mad with rage, again rushed at him.

Sheldon had too much self-respect to strike Littlefield, or do more than defend himself, much as the old man needed to be taught a lesson. Besides, he knew that if he should strike either Littlefield or his wife he would probably be arrested for it, and an ugly story would go out about it, which would probably injure him in the eyes of the people.

"Don't hit me again!" he cried, putting up his hand.

Again the whip whistled through the air.

Sheldon knocked it aside, but the lash stung him on the arm, raising a red welt.

Jerking the whip again from Littlefield's hands,

Sheldon seemed about to hurl it at him, for the pain angered him almost beyond endurance. But he controlled himself.

"I'll scald ye!" cried the woman.

Sheldon threw the whip to the floor in scorn.

"Bah!" he said. "You're too contemptible to live!"

His hand was on the door leading to the stairway which gave admittance to his room, and he swung it open and darted through it, just in time to escape the scalding water that the angry woman threw at him.

Once inside, he closed the door, though he did not lock it, and went on up to his room.

"I'll kill him!" he heard Littlefield scream, and heard Mrs. Littlefield declare that she would "scald him like a chicken!"

At the top of the stairs, Sheldon stopped and laughed.

"Pleasant people to live with!"

There was a humorous aspect to the affair which he could not fail to see, now that he was assured of another home far better than this.

"Let 'em fume!" he muttered. "Why should I pay any attention to two such old curmudgeons? I'll simply get out."

The room he had entered was dark. He struck a match, and, going over to the little stand by the wall, lighted the small lamp he knew was there. Its light revealed the small, scantily furnished place, with the narrow bed in the corner and the stand containing the lamp. A chair was the only other article, except his trunk, unless mention is made of some nails in the side walls which served as hooks and on which some of his clothing hung.

Littlefield and his wife were still raging round below stairs; and, hearing them, Lee Sheldon laughed bitterly.

"It's time to get out of here. I'll go over to Bartlett's to-night, and I'll stay there. I can send for my trunk. I'm glad to get out of here, anyway. Littlefield can milk his own cows to-night, and do his own chores, or let them go."

He began to take his clothing off the nails.

Then he brought a few things out of his trunk.

He made them all up into a bundle, which he wrapped in a newspaper and tied with twine.

Having done that, he hoisted the one little window, which looked out on a shed roof, and crept through it with his bundle.

It was not a long leap from the shed roof to the ground, and he took it lightly.

Then he vaulted the nearby fence, and, finding a

pole, he hung his bundle at the end of it, put the pole over his shoulder, and thus set out for his new home through the darkness.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROOM RECEIVES ANOTHER OCCUPANT.

As Lee Sheldon crept thus through the window and down to the ground and away into the night, he was unaware that a pair of eyes watched him.

A trampish figure had drawn up in the road, and seemed about to turn toward the barn for a night's shelter.

This figure stopped when the noise of the hoisting window came, and then, crouching down by the side of the road, watched and waited until Sheldon was gone.

The window of the little room still stood open, for Sheldon had not closed it after him, and there was the low shed from which Sheldon had jumped. The shed and the open window seemed inviting.

So, instead of turning toward the barn, the trampish figure stole softly to the shed.

For an instant he looked up at the window. From that side of the house he could not hear the voices of the man and woman.

After a little he explored along the wall with his hands, and gave a grunt of satisfaction when he found a short ladder.

"Jist de t'ing!" he said, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "Wonder who de chump was dat come out? But it's all right, fer it gives me a chance to git in, see!"

Hoisting the ladder up to the window, he softly mounted it and entered the room.

Sheldon had blown out the lamp, but the trampish figure fished a match from one of his ragged pockets and relighted it.

He looked about the room, which was now somewhat in disorder. Sheldon had put back into the trunk his belongings not taken, and had locked it, but he had not taken the trouble to clean up the room.

The tramp dropped into one chair and looked about with a wide smile of satisfaction.

"That feller was goin' out in a way to show that he didn't want anybody to know it, and he ain't comin' back ter-night. So I'll jist take it easy 'ere—see! Say, this is great—better than a haymow, anyway, an' how like old times it seems! Wonder who he was, and why he slid? I'll ask him next time we meet."

He laughed, and took off his ragged hat and fanned

himself with it, though the air which came through the open window was rather cold, for the time was November and the nights were decidedly sharp and frosty.

"Yes, I'd like to know who that was, an' why he was in sich a hurry. Might 'a' been a thief. Wonder if there's anything else around here worth takin'?"

He rose from the chair and began to look about.

As he did so he heard footsteps on the stairs, and then the bellowing voice of old Farmer Littlefield.

"Come out o' there, er I'll come in an' drag ye out! Them caows ain't milked yit."

The trampish figure gave a jump of surprise, then dropped into the chair and laughed heavily, though silently.

"So, that's it!" he muttered. "A row with the hired man, an' the hired man's skipped. Well, I don't blame 'im. I'd do the same, you bet."

"Come out-o' there!" Littlefield bellowed.

The tramp rose softly and put the chair against the door, using it as a prop by placing it under the knob.

"Come out o' there an' go an' milk them caows!" yelled Littlefield.

The tramp's hairy face expanded in a wide smile.

"Nit!" he yelled back, in a disguised voice. "I ain't goin' to."

"I'll kill ye if ye don't come aout!" roared Littlefield.

"All right, go ahead wit' your killin'. I'm used to it."

If Littlefield had not been in such a towering rage, he might have discovered that this was not the voice of Lee Sheldon; but he was too angry to notice that.

"When you do come aout, I'll horsewhip ye within an inch o' yer life!" he threatened.

"I wouldn't!" said the tramp, jocularly.

He sat on the edge of the bed, grinning.

The coolness and effrontery of the supposed Lee Sheldon was enough to give Farmer Littlefield a stroke of apoplexy. He fairly purpled with rage.

But, seeing that it would be foolish to attempt to storm that room with no other weapon than a horse-whip, he went back downstairs to confer with his wife.

The trampish figure listened gleefully at the keyhole at the storm of words which came up from below.

"They're in a good humor to-night—I don't think!"

"I'll milk them caows, and in the mornin' I'll whale Tophet aout of him!" Littlefield stormed.

"And he shan't have a bite o' breakfast fer a week!" threatened Mrs. Littlefield. "I ain't goin' to cook an'

do fer no sich ornery trash. He was fair laughin' at ye, was he?"

"Whoop 'er up, old man!" shouted the trampish figure through the keyhole.

Mrs. Littlefield almost fell in a fit.

"The owdacious scoundrel!" she gasped. "Did ye hear that, Jason?"

"Oh, I heard it!" grumbled Littlefield, as he rattled round the room. "He thinks he's too big fer me to handle him; but, by jacks! there's the shotgun yit, and if I can't make him come to time no other way, I'll use that. I got to milk them caows, mother. T'won't never do to let 'em go till mornin'."

"Get out an' milk 'em, you old duffer!" shouted the trampish figure.

Littlefield was so enraged that he grabbed the shotgun from its nail.

"Danged if I don't send a charge of bird shot into ye, you limb of Satan!" he yelled. "Zounds, I will!"

"He's makin' fun o' ye, Jason!" screamed Mrs. Littlefield. "I'd like to scald him."

"I wisht you would!" sputtered Littlefield; "I wish you'd scald ever' hair off'n his wuthless head!"

"Whow! Whoop 'er up!" came through the keyhole.

For an instant Littlefield looked as if he meant to send the charge of bird shot through the ceiling in the direction of that mocking voice.

But he contented himself with shaking his fist at the voice.

"Don't fergit that I'll settle with ye!" he yelled.

"After all the cookin' I've done fer 'im!" sobbed Mrs. Littlefield, growing hysterical. "Jason, I'm afraid to stay in the house! I think I'll go out with ye while you milk. I'm afeared of him. Oh, why did we take sich an ondutiful boy to keep? I've been a mother to him, an' that's the way he treats me!"

She sobbed and blew her nose violently.

"Ta-ta!" came through the keyhole. "When you bid the house good-by, I'll come down an' git some supper. Where d'you keep the pie?"

"Jist listen to him!" sobbed Mrs. Littlefield.

"Oh, I'll settle with you, you varmint of the infernal regions!" yelled Littlefield, again shaking his fist. "Jist remember that I'll settle with you!"

He collected the tin pails and slammed out of the house; and Mrs. Littlefield, frightened now, fled out toward the barn with him.

"Oh, oh!" roared the tramp. "This is enough to kill me!"

He drew back the chair from the door, and, dropping into it, laughed till he shook like a bag of jelly.

"I guess I'd better prop something agin' that," he said, when through laughing.

He drew the little washstand in front of it, for he had no key.

Then he sat down again in the chair and looked the room over.

Rising, he searched round the room. There was nothing of value in it.

"Nothing in the hired man's room, o' course. I wonder if I'd dare to take a look below?"

He pulled the stand away from the door, and, with the lamplight streaming down the stairs, he descended to the lower rooms.

The first thing his eyes lighted on was a little pocketbook tucked behind the clock, on a shelf.

He pulled it out, opened it, and chuckled when he saw five dollars and some loose change in it.

He dropped it into his pocket, and began to look further.

This took him into the kitchen, where his greedy eyes lighted on a mince pie.

As his hands closed on it, he heard Mrs. Littlefield returning to the house.

"Money and pie!" he whispered. "Gee! I'm swimmin' in luck!"

He retreated softly to the stairs, and, mounting, was soon in the room again, with the washstand pushed up against the door.

He sat in the chair and devoured the pie with great relish, eating even the crumbs that fell on his clothing.

He was in a hilarious mood, and drink, or something else, had made him reckless; for, when he finished the pie, he put out the lamp and stretched himself on the bed.

As soon as the farmer got back from the barn, he began to shout again up the stairs, commanding Lee Sheldon to come down and get in some wood and water.

The tramp lay on the bed, laughing.

After awhile the sounds below subsided.

That pie, filling a long-felt want, had made the tramp sleepy, and even before Littlefield quieted down, he had become so heavy-lidded that he could hardly hold his eyes open; and now he fell fast asleep on the bed.

The farmer had pushed the door open, in spite of the opposing washstand, and, invading the room softly, with the horsewhip, he began to lay it heavily across the form on the bed.

"Laugh at me, an' make fun o' me, will ye; and come downstairs while I'm out an' fill yerself up on pie, will ye?"

Almost every word was emphasized with a stroke of the whip.

The trampish figure rolled off the bed, bellowing with pain and rage.

The next moment he had the farmer round the waist, and the next Jason Littlefield was shooting down the stairway, impelled by the tramp's strong arms.

There was a scream as he struck, for Mrs. Littlefield was at the bottom of the stairs awaiting the outcome of her husband's venture into Lee Sheldon's room, and the old man hit her fairly, knocking her down and then falling on her.

After that crash there was an instant of silence.

Then came the question:

"Mother"—the voice of the farmer—"air ye hurt?"

"Oh, Jason!" Mrs. Littlefield wailed, "I'm killed!"

Then the tramp threw himself on the bed, and, stuffing the pillow in his mouth, he rolled and kicked, doubled up with silent laughter.

Yet the stings of that whiplash were smarting on him most unpleasantly.

CHAPTER IV.

JUBAL MARLIN'S RETURN.

At a late hour Jubal Marlin returned down the road toward Farmer Littlefield's.

The moon had risen, and Jubal could see his way plainly—could even see the outlines of the house and barn while they were still a considerable distance away.

Jubal was unsatisfied.

He had made an ignominious failure of his hypnotic trial on Mrs. Littlefield, and had not been able to make a single test on Lee Sheldon.

When Jubal arrived at the house, it was dark. The Littlefields had probably retired for the night.

"I vum! Gone to bed!" said Jubal, looking at the house from the road. "I didn't know it was so late."

He saw the open window of Lee Sheldon's room.

Standing close by the fence, Jubal whistled softly, hoping to arouse Sheldon. The distance to town was about a mile, and Jubal did not want to go back. Besides, he had come there for the express purpose of trying to hypnotize Sheldon.

"If he's sleepy, an' I wake him up, it'll be easier to

git him under the control of it," was Jubal's thought. "I reckon I could climb up to that winder."

He climbed the fence and came close up to the shed, and there again whistled softly.

Then he saw the ladder left by the tramp, and saw how easy it would be to climb to the shed roof and then to Lee's room. He resolved to do it.

Scarcely a minute later he was poking his head through the window.

"St!" he hissed. "Gone tew bed, air ye? Well, it's a good thing to turn in early, on account of that game to-morrow."

He stared hard into the room, supposing that Sheldon was asleep. When he got no answer, he crept on in through the window, fully expecting to find Sheldon curled up in bed.

"By hemlock, if he ain't still aout somewhere workin', at this time o' night! That farmer's goin' tew kill him 'fore the winter's through. Work's all right, an' I believe in it, but that ain't any jestification fer a man killin' the feller that works fer him. By gravy, I'd git another place!"

Jubal sat on the edge of the bed, thinking thus, and wondering how soon Lee Sheldon would return.

He was himself tired and sleepy, for the hour was later than he thought. That day he had engaged in a practice game of football at Cranford; and had also, at the noon hour at Highland, done some practice work with a few Highland fellows who were willing to rush the pigskin with him.

More than a week before he had made the acquaintance of Lee Sheldon, and had visited him at Jason Littlefield's, sleeping with him in this narrow bed overnight. So it did not seem so strange for him to be sitting there awaiting Lee's return.

Being tired, Jubal lay back on the bed after a while, still waiting for Lee.

He had no intention of going to sleep, but he did; and he slept soundly until he was rudely awakened at an early hour in the morning.

Farmer Littlefield was bellowing to Lee Sheldon to get up and go out and milk the cows.

Jubal sat up with a jerk and rubbed his eyes. A dim light was coming through the open window, showing that day was approaching. But Lee Sheldon was not in the bed, nor in the room.

"By jacks, he didn't come back last night!" Jubal muttered.

He knew of the trouble which Lee had had with the crossgrained old farmer, and of the amount of work which Lee was required to perform, for the

night he had stayed here with Lee, the latter had told him all about it, and had gained Jubal's sympathy.

"You'll come daown an' milk them caows naow, er I'll know why this time!" Littlefield was bellowing on the stairs; and from the thud of boots Jubal knew that the angry farmer was ascending to the room.

Jubal's first impulse was to leave the room by the window. But he knew he might be seen, and the straightforward way seemed the best. So he rose from the bed, and, going to the door that opened on the stairs, he pushed aside the washstand which the tramp had placed there, and opened the door.

Jason Littlefield had come up the stairs with his old-fashioned, double-barreled shotgun in his hands, and behind him, near the foot of the stairs, stood Mrs. Littlefield, urging him to be "cautious."

The sudden opening of the door and the popping forth of the head of Jubal Marlin so astonished the farmer that he tripped on the stairs. Then the shotgun roared its contents, the trigger having been pulled by accident, and the shot tore a hole in the ceiling.

It was a heavy charge of shot, and had been in the gun for many months. The rusty barrels and that rusted-in charge caused the gun to kick like a mule; and the next instant old Farmer Littlefield was tumbling back down the stairs, bellowing with pain and surprise, having been kicked from his feet by the gun.

Mrs. Littlefield fled before him, as he tumbled from step to step, bringing up at the bottom of the stairs with a bump and a groan.

Jubal was surprised and frightened. Apparently the farmer had meant to kill him. He recalled the happenings of the previous evening, when Mrs. Littlefield had beaten him over the head with the dishpan and had driven him from the house.

Jubal now slammed the door shut and leaped for the window.

Littlefield heard him land with a thump on the roof of the shed. Wild with rage, he ran out of the house, vowing that he would have Jubal's life.

Jubal had just cleared the fence with a flying leap when Littlefield came round the house. Seeing him there, the irate farmer blazed away with the second barrel of the rusty old shotgun.

It kicked again, with as much force as before, knocking Littlefield once more from his feet.

The shot, plowing up the earth close to Jubal, sent that young fellow spinning at his best gait along the road in the direction of Highland.

"Great codfish!" he sputtered, as he puffed along.

"That tarnal critter tried tew murder me! I dunno but I'd ought tew have the law on him."

Seeing that Jubal had escaped, Littlefield returned to the house, groaning, declaring that his right shoulder was broken; and Mrs. Littlefield began to fume about, heating water and preparing a mustard plaster.

CHAPTER V.

THE CALL FOR THE TRUNK, AND AFTERWARD.

When Jubal had run for half a mile or so, he became winded and slowed up. He knew he was out of danger.

He looked about him. The sky was rapidly reddening in the east.

"Wonder what in time has become of Lee Sheldon?" was his thought. "By hemlock, I gotter see him, if I can, and work that trick on him. This is the day of the game."

When Jubal started into anything, he was very persistent.

The observing reader has already found that out, doubtless.

Hence, thinking again of Lee Sheldon, Jubal stopped his mad flight toward the town and began to reflect on the situation. In spite of what had happened, he still believed that Sheldon would return to Farmer Littlefield's. He had noticed, for one thing, that Lee's trunk was still in the room.

Jubal sat down by the roadside to think the matter over; and by and by, instead of going on in the direction of Highland, he began to retrace his way slowly toward Littlefield's.

The sun was now up.

When he came in sight of Littlefield's house, at a bend in the road, he stopped again and surveyed the place from that safe distance.

Littlefield was coming from the barn with a pail of milk in his hand.

"I'm guessin' that tumble daownstairs didn't cripple him up much," was Jubal's conclusion. "But Lee ain't there, er the old man wouldn't be doin' the milkin'. Lee told me he had all that work tew do. Wonder what's become of him?"

Jubal waited at the roadside until sometime after sunrise, hoping to see Lee. Now and then he took out the whirling disc and looked at it.

"Yeou're no good!" he said. "I reckon there's some kink abaout ye that I didn't git. If I'd had t'other'n that Reel's got, I allaow I'd 'a' worked it. But yeou don't seem tew be any good."

While inspecting the disc, he heard the rattle of wagon wheels. A middle-aged farmer, driving a pair of spirited horses, passed him, giving him a questioning glance.

This was the father of the boy who had been injured by the runaway near the schoolhouse the previous afternoon, and one of those restive horses had done the trick.

Jubal's interest quickened when he saw this farmer stop his team in front of Littlefield's.

He was not so far away but that he could hear the farmer call to Littlefield, and he saw Littlefield come out into the road.

"He can't have it!" he heard Littlefield bellow, waving his arms.

The farmer with the wagon had come for Lee's trunk.

Jubal's interest was so much quickened that he leaped the fence and hastened toward the house, behind the screen of the willows that grew along the fence.

The farmer and Littlefield were having some kind of an altercation when Jubal drew near enough to hear clearly.

"Tell him to come fer his trunk hisself. I shan't give it to him. I don't keer if he did help your little boy; he throwed me daown the stairs last night and nighabout killed me, and I'm goin' to have the law on him, so help me Joshua! Tell him to come and git the trunk hisself. He don't darst to do it; fer he knows I'll shoot him full of holes when he does."

"Wow!" muttered Jubal. "It must be Lee's trunk he's come fer, and war's in the air! So Lee throwed him daownstairs last night, did he? Good fer Lee!"

Littlefield continued to rave.

"An' he stole my wife's pockitbook, with money in it, an' took a mince pie right off'n the kitchen table. He et it in his room, fer the crumbs was there this mornin'. And a friend o' his, another low-daown, measly skunk"—"Wow!" muttered Jubal—"stayed in that room all night, without my permission an' without my knowin' of it. If my gun hadn't kicked this mornin', I'd 'a' filled him full o' shot fer it, tew!"

"Wow!" said Jubal, again, feeling his flesh tingle as he thought of that tearing load of bird shot sent at him. "Ain't he a hot old geezer? I wisht naow Lee'd broke his old neck when he pitched him daownstairs. There was somethin' doin' there last night, I reckon, 'fore I got back. An' think o' me goin' into that room, an' layin' daown jist like a lamb in a daisy paster, after all that! It's lucky I'm livin', that's what!"

By and by the farmer, unable to get the trunk, turned his team about and drove back along the road.

As he did so, Jubal made his appearance, coming out of the bushes so suddenly that the spirited horses reared.

The farmer reined in, in response to Jubal's beckoning, and stared at him.

"Was yeou there after Lee Sheldon's trunk?"

The farmer smiled when Jubal asked that.

"I was, but I didn't git it. Littlefield's feelin' ruther warm this mornin'. Says that Lee stole his wife's pocketbook."

"I don't believe it."

"Me nuther."

He looked at Jubal keenly.

"Yeou didn't take it? I'm guessin' yeou're the young feller Littlefield was speakin' about; an', if so, yeou must have staid in that room last night."

Jubal came up to the wagon.

"Is Lee to yeour haouse?" he asked.

"Yes, an' he's goin' to stay there."

"Well, I dunno nothin' abaout that pocketbook. But I'm Lee's friend, and I'm goin' over to his new place to see him, if yeou're willin'?"

Bartlett—for that was the man's name—expressed his willingness, and Jubal climbed over the front wheel and mounted to the high spring seat beside him.

As the wagon rattled away on its return, Jubal told Bartlett what he knew of the happenings of the evening and night.

Bartlett grinned.

"So the ole man tried to shoot ye, an' she tried to scald ye? But what was yeou makin' faces at her fer?"

"Jist fer—fer fun," said Jubal, caution coming to him.

Bartlett grinned again.

"You've found, I reckon, that some people don't appreciate that kind o' fun. Can't say that I would myself."

"I'm glad Lee's goin' to stay with you," Jubal remarked, anxious to shift the subject.

"Littlefield's an old skinflint, an' Lee can stay with me so long's he wants to. I told him he could, after he'd done that fer my boy. I oughtn't to have resked Jimmy with one of these horses, but he thought he c'd drive it."

Lee Sheldon was doing the morning chores at Bartlett's when the wagon arrived with Bartlett and Jubal, minus the trunk.

"Oh, well, let it stay there a few days," said Lee,

when he found the trunk had not been brought. "But he lies when he says I threw him down the stairs. He didn't come up to the room at all, and he didn't know when I left; for, as I told you, I left through the window."

Lee Sheldon did not know of the tramp's invasion of that room; and Farmer Littlefield was charging the acts of the tramp to Lee.

Jubal took breakfast at Bartlett's, and remained there with Lee through the forenoon.

There was a good deal of work to be done, for this was Saturday, and Lee wanted to get it all out of the way before dinner, that he might have the whole of the afternoon for the ball game.

Once, when both Jubal and Lee were tired, and were sitting on a pile of wood which they had been working up, Jubal thought to make a bold stroke, and took out the whirling disc.

"J'ever see anything like that before?" he questioned.

Lee took it and examined it.

"I never did. What is it?"

"Well, it's a queer little machine fer makin' people go tew sleep. I can make yeou go to sleep in two minutes by jist whirlin' that before yeour eyes."

"I'll bet you can't."

Jubal's face flushed with anticipated triumph.

"I'll go ye!"

He set the disc to spinning, and looked steadily into Lee's face, while Lee stared hard at the whirling wheel, just as Jubal told him to.

By and by Jubal began to make passes with his hands. The light of victory was in his eyes.

But the wheel spun, and Lee stared, and Jubal made passes with his hands, and the effect which Jubal expected was not produced.

Jubal's hand grew tired at last of holding the disc, and Lee grew weary of staring.

"I guess I've won!" said Lee.

Jubal looked at the wheel in disgust. He had had his great opportunity, and had failed.

"Somethin's the matter with it," he confessed. "But I seen a feller do that very trick, and it worked all right."

"Were you trying to hypnotize me?" Lee asked, with a smile that made Jubal flush still redder. "If you were, just remember that it's well-nigh impossible to do it unless the other fellow submits his will to yours. If he resists, it's hard to do anything. And then, it's a thing that not everybody can do, anyway."

"I was jist tryin' tew see what I could do," Jubal

admitted, brazening the thing through now. "Of course, I didn't reckon I could, but I thought I'd try it. I jist made this thing yisterday."

"Oh, you made it?"

"Sure thing."

"Why do you need that?"

"I dunno why, except that Reel Snodgrass has one. That gimme the idee. And I thought I'd jist see if I could do anything in that line, and yeou're the fust one I've had a chance tew try on. No harm done, I reckon?"

He laughed nervously.

Lee laughed heartily.

"None whatever."

"Do you know anything about hynotin'?" Jubal asked, with anxious caution.

"Nothing."

"Reel Snodgrass is great at it. He co't me with it onc't."

"He's on your football team?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll get to see him this afternoon. He must be a wonder."

He laughed again. Then he got up from the wood-pile and again seized the ax, for more of the wood needed to be split before dinner.

And Jubal, anxious to make him forget that little hypnotic experiment, jumped into the work again with him.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY TO HIGHLAND.

Jubal left Bartlett's shortly after the midday meal, and struck into the road leading to Highland. Lee Sheldon was to come on into Highland later.

At the crossroads, just at the border of the town, as he plodded along, Jubal came on a merry party.

He heard them laughing and singing even before he saw them, and he hastened, for he knew who they were.

Then they burst upon his sight—Jack Lightfoot and a number of his friends, in football clothing and sweaters, and Nellie Conner and Kate Strawn, with some other girls, attired for an outing, and wearing heavy clothing, for the morning air had been cool.

Jubal waved his hand, yelled hilariously, and the team drawing this party came to a halt.

"Hello!" said Jack. "Where've you been?"

"Daown to Lee Sheldon's."

"Oh, yes, that's the new captain of the Highland

eleven. I've heard of him, and you were telling me about him. Climb in."

"Does he live in the country?" asked Nellie.

"Yep," said Jubal. "Jist like me. I'm a country-man, yeou know, when I'm to home; and they're the kind fer football players."

He was climbing in, his mouth spread in a wide grin.

"Then I'm afraid Cranford will be defeated this afternoon!" Kate joked.

"Well, by granny, if Highland had a hull eleven like him, I'm thinkin' Cranford would have tew hustle."

"So you've gone back on us?" said Lafe.

"I ain't, nuther; but I'm speakin' the truth about him."

Jubal flung himself into the wagon and down on the hay which filled the bottom of the bed.

"Always room for one more," remarked Nellie.

"I heard yeou singin'. Go on with it. I've got a year fer music."

"Oh, she can't sing that long!" cried Ned Skeen.

"Who said fer her tew sing long? She can sing that piece aout, and I'd like tew hear her."

Then the wagon rolled on again, with Nellie leading in "Neath the Shade of the Old Apple Tree."

Jubal helped to bellow the ending of the chorus:

"With a heart that is true,
I'll be waiting for you—
'Neath the shade of the old apple tree."

Perhaps these journeyings to and from the different places where the Cranford boys played ball was the most pleasant part of the sport. At any rate, the Cranford young people enjoyed such rides to the full.

"Where's Reel?" asked Jubal, when the song was finished, and before another could be begun.

"He went over with Delancy, in his auto," Skeen answered. "Several Cranford girls went with him. Lily Livingston was one. We're going to have a good crowd there from Cranford this afternoon, for several went by train."

"Lee thinks his eleven kin wax us," said Jubal.

"He's just hollering to keep his courage up."

"I don't know so much about that. I might 'a' thought so yisterday, but I seen 'em practicin' yisterday, and took a little hand with some o' them myself. I tell yeou they've got an eleven that ain't tew be sneezed at. They're callin' Lee Sheldon the Jack Lightfoot of Highland, b'jings. And he's all right fer a leader and trainer. He's put 'em in purty good shape, lemme tell ye."

"Hear that, Jack?" cried Lafe. "They're calling Lee Sheldon the Jack Lightfoot of Highland."

Jack laughed.

"I hope he'll honor the name."

"By granny, he's doin' it!" asserted Jubal. "He's done wonders with that eleven. They're really believin' they kin lick us this afternoon."

Ned Skeen started up a song of his own manufacture, which the crowd had already been singing. Ned imagined that he was something of a poet. It went to the tune of "The Good Old Summer Time."

"Oh, the good old autumn time,
On the way to Highland town,
To meet the Highland football boys,
And do them right up brown.
We'll kick the ball,
And on it fall,
Oh, we'll have a very great time,
Pounding the pigskin over the field,
In the good old autumn time."

Ned Skeen led in singing this, and fancied that he covered himself with honor.

"You've been visiting Sheldon?" Jack asked of Jubal, when the song ended.

"Yep. An' had the time of my life. I'll tell yeou all ababout it the fust chance I git. I'll bet yeou'll be interested in it."

"Tell it now, so that all can hear it," urged Nellie.

"Nope. I'd like tew, but yeou'd laugh at me. Well, it was a corker!"

Then, though he did not intend to tell a word of it, they so trapped him and picked at him with questions that almost before he knew it, Jubal had told the whole story, not leaving out even his trial of hypnotism on Mrs. Littlefield.

The whole crowd was roaring before he finished, and even he was laughing heartily, for it did seem funny, looking back at it, though he had not thought it at all comical at the time.

"By granny, yeou come nigh bein' one player short this afternoon!" he declared to Jack. "If that woman had busted my head in with her dishpan, er if the old man had reached me with that load of shot, I don't reckon I'd been in any condition fer play to-day."

"Oh, say," said Skeen, holding up his hand dramatically, "did you hear about that boy who got shot this morning, down at Norman's store?"

Norman's was a store where guns and ammunition and like articles were sold.

"No," cried Kate. "I didn't hear about it. Who was it?"

"Jim Clayton's boy."

"Why, I saw him myself, just before we started!" said Nellie, whose blue eyes had opened wide at Ned's words.

"Yes, but he got shot before that."

"Before that?"

"Yes, he bought it—bought the shot. I said he got shot, didn't I?"

Nellie flushed and threw a handful of hay at him.

"You mean thing!" she cried.

"Throw him out o' the wagon!" yelled Jubal. "Anybody who'd do that oughtn't to be let ride with a party like this."

Thus they rolled into Highland, laughing and joking, singing and telling stories.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE GRIDIRON.

Though he had worked hard that forenoon, Lee Sheldon was in Highland and had his eleven out on the gridiron in training and going through the signal practice long before the time for the game to be called. They called themselves the Highland Philistines.

Jack Lightfoot met him there for the first time, and was pleased with his appearance and talk. It seemed certain that so far as young Sheldon was concerned, football at Highland would be clean and honorable.

Jack was also impressed with the quickness and lightness with which the eleven went through some of their practice work. It indicated that they were in good condition and Cranford would have no walk-over that afternoon.

"Jubal was right," was his thought. "Sheldon has put a lot of ginger into the team since he came here and was made captain. He looks to be the right man in the right place."

A large crowd was streaming out to the football field. The afternoon had warmed up, and promised to be pleasant, though still cool enough for good football work.

Among those who crowded about the gridiron, looking on and commenting, Jack observed a trampish-looking fellow, who eyed the practice of the Highland eleven as if he understood what they were doing and was deeply interested.

"Dat's de game fer me!" Jack heard him say. "If I could play football ag'in I'd feel as if I was swimmin' in glory."

Jack regarded him more closely.

He saw that the tramp was watching the practice work as narrowly as if he were the referee of a game,

and the comments he made now and then told of his enthusiasm.

"Chee! Football's de game, an' don't you fergit it!"

Over and over Jack heard him say that, and heard him now and then clap his hands together in soft applause.

Finally he noticed Jack, who stood close by him.

"Youse is from Cranford?" he asked, with a very trampish dialect. "Well, dem fellers is goin' to skin ye—see! I'd be willin' to bet me hopes of a bed in a haymow somewheres to-night dat dey lays it all over youse."

Jack laughed and walked away, and again later saw the tramp keenly watching the practice work.

Jack had no means of knowing, of course, that this was the fellow who had crawled into that little bedroom at Littlefield's. Jack had heard nothing of that, for Jubal had known nothing about it. Nor did Littlefield himself, at the time.

In his pocket the tramp carried the purse he had taken from behind the clock at Littlefield's, with the small amount of money it contained.

Jack now put his eleven through a little preliminary work, just to warm them up and see that they were all right and ready for the football battle.

He had great faith in his team, and believed they could win that day, even though the Highland eleven, as he had discovered, was not likely to be "easy."

Jack had been persistent and relentless in drill work, and there had already been some big games played, in addition to minor ones at home, which made good practice.

The gathering crowd began to grow restless and impatient, as they showed by their cries for the game to begin.

The referee and other officials now came upon the field.

Then a cheer rose from the spectators, for they saw that the game was to open.

When it died away, a single cheer broke on the air: "Whoop! Hurraw fer Highland! Hoo-law fer de Philistines!"

The cheer and the words had come from the tramp. "You've got one strong backer," said Jack, speaking to Lee Sheldon.

"I heard him," said Sheldon, laughing. "We'll have to claim him, if he hollers for Highland."

The captains were standing together.

The referee took out a coin.

"Heads or tails?" he asked.

"Heads," said Jack.

"Tails, then," said Sheldon.

The coin was flipped into the air and fell to the ground.

"Tails."

Sheldon had won the toss up.

The afternoon had warmed, and the wind had shifted to the south.

"South goal," said Sheldon, making his choice.

This gave the kick-off to Cranford.

The referee placed the ball in the center of the gridiron.

The lines, newly made, gleamed white on the grass, except where some scuffling shoe work in the practice play had blurred them a little.

This was the old baseball field, and the bleachers and grand stand were filled with people, wrapped in warm cloaks and coats.

The football boys had laid aside their sweaters, and were hideous in nose shields and other appliances of the football field. Some of them looked so disguised that their best friends might have been excused for not knowing them.

The crowd applauded as Jack stepped into position for the kick-off—a handsome young fellow in his soiled football clothing, sinuous and athletic, and with strength and muscular alertness visible in every line as he stepped into place.

The teams had lined up as follows:

Cranford.	Highland.
Jubal Marlin, l. e.	Perlie Hyatt, l. e.
Bob Brewster, l. t.	Sol Russell, l. t.
Brodie Strawn, l. g.	Ben Yates, l. g.
Connie Lynch, center.	Tom Johnson, center.
Lafe Lampton, r. g.	Cale Young, r. g.
Saul Messenger, r. t.	Bill Miller, r. t.
Reel Snodgrass, r. e.	Link Porter, r. e.
Wilson Crane, q'back.	Phin Hester, q'back.
Jack Lightfoot, l. h.	Kit Carver, l. h.
Phil Kirtland, r. h.	Lee Sheldon, r. h.
Tom Lightfoot, f'back.	Mat Foster, f'back.

It will be seen that Jack had the best team that could be brought out of Cranford. His rush line was particularly strong and heavy.

But on the other hand, Lee Sheldon's rush line seemed as strong, to look at the big, lithe fellows who composed it.

"A battle for blood to-day!" remarked one of the spectators, his face flushed with anticipation.

Then the yell of the tramp broke again on the air:

"Hooraw fer Highland!"

And as if that were a signal, the cheers of the Highland rooters bellowed forth.

Punk!

Jack's toe struck the pigskin and sent it flying into the wind, straight toward the Highland goal.

Lee Sheldon caught it on the ten-yard line and punted it back skillfully into Cranford territory.

The fight was on, and the spectators were cheering.

Lee had forgotten Jason Littlefield and the things that had troubled him so recently.

Phil Kirtland caught the punt on the forty-five yard line.

The Philistine tacklers were close on him—too close for him to punt. So he put his heel down at the spot where he had caught the ball on the fly.

This entitled his side to a free kick, and the Highland players were not permitted by the rules to come within ten yards of his mark.

The Highland backs retired toward their own goal, and others scattered over the field; and when the free kick was made by Kirtland, Lee Sheldon again caught the ball.

He punted once more, driving the pigskin end-over-end, deep into Cranford territory, being favored by the wind, which sent it sailing.

Jack Lightfoot caught it on the twenty-yard line; but the tacklers were right on him, and the ball was down.

Here came the first lineup for a scrimmage.

Again the yell of the tramp bellowed forth:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

The teams lined up, the Highland eleven nervously and feverishly watching their opponents, as Wilson Crane called quickly the Cranford signals.

Connie Lynch passed the pigskin back with a swift motion, and Wilson swung it to Jack.

Jack started with the ball, driving between his own left guard and left tackle, where the rushers were boring a hole for him, the whole movement being made as quick as thought.

Lee Sheldon threw himself into his line there.

"Hold 'em!" he roared, for he saw that Jack had the ball and was going through there, if possible.

The two lines swayed and trembled.

Powerful were the shoulders of Brodie Strawn, Bob Brewster and Connie Lynch. They fairly lifted the opposing line, boring through and taking Jack with them.

Jack almost hurdled the line, with the opposing players hanging to him, and Brodie and Bob on each side of him, pushing him on and shoving at the opposition.

A second or two later Jack was down, and the whistle of the referee was blowing, but he had carried the ball forward seven full yards.

There was another quick lineup, while the bellowing yell of the tramp volleyed across the field:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

He was standing out among the spectators, as close up to the gridiron as he was permitted, and was swinging his ragged arms in his excitement.

Indeed, everyone had yelled as Jack made that seven-yard gain through the Highland line.

Wilson was calling his signals again. He was a good general, for that small birdlike head held a good deal of brains; and he was as quick as a cat.

The signals varied slightly, for the purpose of fooling the Philistines, who thought an attempt to go through in another place was now in order; but Jack bucked the line at the same place.

"Hold 'em!" yelled Sheldon, again throwing himself into the opening breach.

Highland tried to hold back Brodie and Bob, Connie and Jack.

Lafe and those on the right were pushing into the Philistines there.

But again Jack went through, literally walking on the fellows who tried to stop him.

He broke clear of the line this time, but was unable to gain speed before he was tackled and downed by the Highland full-back, who had held himself in reserve for the purpose of tackling the man with the ball if he got through.

But there was another gain, of ten yards this time, to Cranford's credit.

Nevertheless, the yell of the tramp rang out:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

And his ragged arms waved like the wings of a wind-mill.

Again Cranford bucked the line, Phil Kirtland this time taking the ball from Wilson.

Lafe Lampton, Saul Messenger and Reel Snodgrass swung against the Highland line like a stone cast from a catapult. They were all powerful fellows, and Phil was wonderfully strong himself.

They simply tore the line apart at that point, and made a gain of five yards.

The ball was walking down the field toward the Highland goal.

"Hold 'em!" screamed Lee Sheldon, as the next scrimmage came.

He threw himself and his backs before the Cranford rush line. But he was crushed down. He clung to Lafe Lampton's legs, and the others of the rush line tried to stop Phil.

They succeeded in downing him at the end of three yards.

The referee's whistle blew, and when the tangle of legs, arms and bodies unwound it was found that Ben Yates, Highland's left guard, had his arm wrenched.

He got up, groaning, and wanted to go on with the play; but Sheldon took him out and put in a substitute.

At this substitute the next massed play was hurled, carrying him from his feet and bowling the man with the ball into the opposing line.

"Through with it!" yelled Lafe.

His powerful shoulders, were like those of a bull. They bored a hole. Saul Messenger, with his pugilistic head down and his humpy, muscular shoulders bunched like a battering ram, was right at Lafe's side. With them was Reel Snodgrass. And Phil Kirtland again had the ball.

"Through with it!" howled Lafe.

And the ball went through for five yards more.

The Cranford rooters were howling.

But still that defiant yell of the tramp roared over the field:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

Jack now went through the line for five yards; and a minute later went through it for five yards more.

Wilson was calling the signals again.

Lee Sheldon began to feel desperate. His line was breaking again and again like a rope of sand.

Wilson, receiving the ball from Connie, passed it with a quick flirt to Kirtland.

Kirtland fumbled it, and then tried to fall on the ball.

He accidentally struck the ball with his toe, as he made the downward dive; and the ball, shooting out from under him, was fallen on by Link Porter, Highland's right end, toward whom it had gone.

The ball was Highland's, on her fifty-yard line.

CHAPTER VIII.

JACK LIGHTFOOT'S TOUCH-DOWN.

Jack Lightfoot expected Highland to drop back for a punt.

Instead, Lee Sheldon got the ball, in the scrimmage that followed, and tried to go with it through Jubal Marlin, Cranford's left end.

Jubal was hurled down by the impact of the Highland rush line, but he got a good grip of Sheldon's sturdy legs and clung like a leech.

Others piled on Sheldon, and he went down, with the ball under him, not having been able to advance it more than a yard.

Once more came the quick lineup.

This time there was a lightning criss-cross on Highland's part, and a feint of passing the ball to Kit Carver, the left half-back.

It was so cleverly done that even Jack Lightfoot was fooled.

Kit started to go round Cranford's left end, aided by a strong interference.

He succeeded in tearing past Jubal Marlin; and broke away, also from Bob Brewster; but was tackled and downed by Brodie Strawn, before he had gone five yards beyond the line.

So clever was the deception that the referee put the whistle to his lips to signal that the ball was down, and Jack felt that the progress of the ball had been stopped.

He saw Lee Sheldon running, with both hands free. Then he caught a view of Sheldon's back, as that clever young fellow cleared the rush line of Cranford. There was a suspicious bulge in the back of the light sweater that Lee was wearing.

Too late it came to Jack, like a flash, that Lee Sheldon had the ball. It was there—not in his hands, or hugged to his breast—but under his sweater, which was loose at the back. Later, Jack was to discover that the sweater had a draw string there, prepared for this particular play, and that by a jerk on the draw string the bottom of the sweater could be tightened, holding the ball securely.

As Jack made the startling discovery that the man who was down had not the ball, but that it was in possession of Lee Sheldon, he started for Lee, trying for a tackle.

But Lee was as clever a runner as in some other things.

He had a start of ten yards before Jack started in pursuit of him.

About this same time the referee discovered, also, that the man who was down did not have the ball, and the whistle dropped from his lips.

Those who had piled on Carver likewise now made the same amazing discovery.

Then they saw Jack and Lee going down the field like a fox and hound.

Jack put on all steam, and fairly flew over the ground.

Lee ran as he perhaps had never run before. Before him he saw the Cranford goal posts, and behind him he knew that Jack Lightfoot was coming like the wind.

The yell of the tramp bellowed over the field, and everywhere the spectators were screaming their applause.

Foot by foot Jack gained on Lee Sheldon. He decreased the distance to five yards; then to three; and then it seemed that by a bound he could put his fingers on Lee's legs.

But the line was at hand.

As Lee came up to it, with Jack right behind him, Jack made a dive for a tackle.

Lee's twinkling legs seemed to glide right through Jack's fingers; though, as a matter of fact, Jack did not quite reach them.

Then Lee was over the line, and had made a touch-down.

The yell of the tramp had new ginger in it, as he howled:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

The Cranford players came rushing up, more than half of them declaring that Lee's play was a fraud and that the touch-down should not be allowed.

"Anything in the rules against it?" said Lee, grinning at them.

He was fairly panting for breath.

"Anything against it?" he demanded of Jack.

"I'm—afraid not! We'll have to let the officials decide."

They decided against Cranford, in spite of the "kick" of some of the Cranford players.

"Howling mackerels!" shouted Ned Skeen. "If that isn't a clear case of improper play, what is?"

"You won't say that this is improper, will you?" said Lee, bringing the ball out for the purpose of kicking goal.

He had the wind in his favor, and he made a beautiful kick, clearing the goal posts.

"Score six fer our side!" roared the tramp. "Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

The ball was brought back to the center of the field.

Again Jack kicked off, sending it down to the ten-yard line, where it was caught by Mat Foster, the Highland full-back.

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!" yelled the tramp, amid the cheers of the Highland enthusiasts.

Mat Foster punted the ball back to Cranford's fifty-yard line where it was punted again by Jack Lightfoot, who drove it to Highland's thirty-yard line.

Here it was down, being again Highland's ball.

There was a quick lineup here, and again Highland tried to break the line.

But she lost the ball on downs, not having been able to advance it five yards in three plays.

Then came lively work on the part of Cranford.

Wilson Crane, the quarter-back, made a feint of passing the ball to Phil Kirtland, but gave it to Jack. Kirtland hugged the imaginary ball to his breast and jumped for Highland's left, while the interference was mixed up with the Highland rushers.

The Highland men were sure Kirtland had the ball. At the same moment that Kirtland made his dive for the left end, Jack Lightfoot jumped for the right.

In another form it was the same play which Highland had just used so successfully.

Lee Sheldon discovered this, when it was practically too late.

He leaped at Jack for a tackle, and, missing it, fell to the ground.

But this came at Jack.

A Highland tackle threw at him from sidewise, and Jack dodged him.

Another was in front. Lafe dashed at this one, to push him aside. Jack made a jump that took him over the fellow's head.

The entire lines were, apparently, in wild motion and inextricably mixed, yet all were now converging toward Jack.

Through the opposition Jack plowed his way.

Two other tacklers leaped at him, clutched and hung to him, but he shook himself free.

He now started down the field with tremendous leaps, almost the entire Highland eleven trying to reach and tackle him.

His position was dangerous.

In addition to those runners who were trying to reach him, Mat Foster, the full-back, and Kit Carver, the left half-back, were still in front of him, one on one side of the field and one on the other.

They were each running diagonally across the field to head him off before he could cross the goal line.

It was a wild race.

As he neared the line they closed in on him, forcing him to deviate, and thus lose time, which brought the pursuers right up on him.

His friends were hurrying to his aid. But he seemed now to be in the midst of the Highland mob.

Then he dived by a runner, and sprang forward, just as the side tacklers leaped for him.

Jack was dead game. He was not down, and he still had the ball. The line was right before him, and he intended to cross it and make a touch-down.

That was the one and only thought in his mind. And he made the effort. It was a successful effort, for he broke through.

As Jack, hugging the pigskin to his breast, cleared the scrambling mob, he literally dragged a couple of the Philistines along over the line.

But he got the ball down—made his touch-down, and that counted five, if no more could be added to it.

The Cranford enthusiasts were now fairly screaming their joy.

"Kick it over!" Jack panted, to Phil Kirtland.

The ball was brought out, and Lafe Lampton placed it for Phil.

Jack dropped to the ground. He had spent his whole strength in that terrific feat.

The wind was against Phil; and Jack, lying on the ground, literally panting for breath, watched him with some anxiety.

Punk!

The toe of Phil's shoe lifted the ball.

It shot toward the goal posts.

The wind caught it and began to veer it.

Jack's friends had a moment of breathless suspense, for they feared the effort was to fail.

But—the ball moved on, in spite of the wind, for the propulsion given it by Phil had been strong; and it shot between the posts and over the bar.

Cranford had six.

"A tie!" was roared.

And again the tramp bellowed:

"Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

The whistle announced the close of the first half of the game.

CHAPTER IX.

WEARY WATSON TO THE FRONT.

Two of Highland's best players had been knocked out in the attempt to keep Jack Lightfoot from making that touch-down.

Cale Young, their heavy right guard, had been thrown in trying to make a tackle, and had so jammed his shoulder that he was practically out of the game.

And Bill Miller, the right tackle, had twisted his ankle in trying to turn quickly to cut Jack off.

Already Lee Sheldon had one substitute in, in place of Ben Yates, the left guard.

This so weakened the Highland rush line that, in view of the fact that Highland had shown herself already unable to hold Cranford when bucking the line, it gave Lee Sheldon a fit of the dumps.

He was lying on the ground, feeling rather blue. He had made a great fight himself, and had pretty well exhausted his strength, and that of itself will give one a pair of blue spectacles even when everything looks favorable.

The interval between the halves was being utilized by the tired and blown players to rest.

It was at this time that the tramp, making his way along the edge of the gridiron, crossed into it and spoke to Sheldon, bending over as if whispering to him.

The action attracted attention, and Jack, among others, saw it.

"Weary Willie is trying to encourage the Highland captain," said Tom, who lay on the grass near Jack.

"It looks so."

"He's been yelling for them for all he was worth."

Jack laughed.

"And he's certainly got good lungs."

They saw Lee Sheldon sit up and give the tramp a sharp look, and then begin to talk to him earnestly.

The tramp dropped down on the grass by his side to continue the conversation.

"I wonder what Weary is up to?" grunted Lafe.

They were soon to know, for Lee Sheldon arose from the grass, with the tramp, and both came in Jack's direction.

Jack saw that Lee wanted to speak to him, and he got on his feet.

"Lightfoot," said Lee, lifting his cap and revealing the rim of perspiration that still clung to his damp forehead, "I want to introduce this fellow to you."

Jack glanced sharply at the tramp, who met his surprised look with a wide grin.

"He calls himself Weary Watson, but says that isn't his name, of course; yet he claims that he used to live in Highland, and something he has told me makes me believe him and believe that he can play football. I was just thinking, as I lay there, that, as I haven't any further substitutes who are worth anything, I might as well throw up the sponge and tell you to take the game. But if you're willing for me to play this man as one of my guards I'll go on with the thing."

He looked anxiously at Jack.

The proposition was so strange that Jack hardly knew what to say at first.

"The thing is a tie now—six to six—and no one can tell what will happen in the next half," he objected.

"But in that last run I lost two of my best men—Cale Young and Bill Miller. Your fellows will simply rip up my line now, unless I can find some way to strengthen it. So, having had a talk with this man, I'm willing to put him in, if you're willing that I may. If he doesn't turn out as good as he thinks he is, it's my loss. Anyway, I'm at the end of my row."

He looked as if he hardly expected that Jack would allow him to put in the tramp as a guard.

"You want to quit the game?" Jack asked.

"Well," said Sheldon, doggedly, "what's the use of us going ahead? If some of my men hadn't been knocked out that last time I'd have good strong hopes, but as it is——"

He waved his hand with an air of hopeless disgust.

As already stated, Jack had come to admire Lee Sheldon. He saw that Lee was honest.

"I haven't any particular right to put him in, though he says he once lived in Highland," Lee went on. "But I can do it, of course, if you make no objection. I'd like to try him."

The tramp stood with his ragged hat in his hand, grinning.

"Chee! if you'll let me go into dat game I'll show youse somet'ing doin'!"

"It's irregular," said Jack; "but I'll speak with the fellows."

He stepped aside and called the Cranford eleven

about him, stating to them the singular proposition of Lee Sheldon.

Little Nat Kimball was in the crowd that collected round Jack, being one of the substitutes.

He looked at the tramp, sniffed, and drew out his handkerchief as if to wipe away any possible germs that might float to him from the tramp.

"Why, he isn't clean!" he objected.

"You little rat," said Skeen, "you're not going to be in the play, anyway; so he won't touch you."

"I'm going to be in it as much as you are; and they may want me for a substitute. So, I object to playing with a thing like that."

"We can win the game," said Jack. "Lee is discouraged and will weaken, if we don't agree to that."

"Let him weaken!" said Saul Messenger, with a scowl. "That's the better for us. We came over here to win, didn't we?"

"That's what I say," cried Brodie. "Are we responsible if his men get knocked out?"

"I rather think we are," said Tom, with a smile. "Our side knocked them out."

"But it's in the game," objected Saul. "If they're weakened, so much the better for our side."

"I shan't decide this matter at all," said Jack, "but will put it to a vote. All of you who are willing to abstain from making objection to the tramp say 'Ay!' Those opposed 'No!'"

To his surprise—to his great surprise—the 'Ayes' had it.

"Give Sheldon whatever he wants," said Bob Brewster, generously, explaining his vote; "we can beat 'em anyway, easily."

"Surely!" said Lafe, fishing up a peanut. "We could beat 'em, if they should put in a whole new rush line."

"It may make the thing livelier," said Connie, "and fun is what I'm afther, nixt to winnin' the game."

"By granny," cried Jubal, "that's jist what I was thinkin', an' that's why I voted fer it. A tramp playin' football will be somethin' new."

"But I wish he'd wash his face and comb his hair, and get into some other clothes," objected Kirtland.

"Oh, I forgot to mention that Lee said he'd put

him into the clothes of one of the retired men," Jack explained.

The tramp had edged nearer, and overheard this, and he shot at Phil an unpleasant look.

But when Jack carried the news to Lee Sheldon, and Lee communicated it to the tramp, the latter seemed to have taken heed of what he had heard; for, after he had disappeared in a dressing room for the shift into the football clothing which Lee furnished him, and then came out again, he came out a new man.

His long hair and stubby beard still showed, but he seemed to have made vigorous applications of soap and water, so much so that his face now fairly shone—it was a sunburned red—and the football clothing supplied to him, showed him to be, what he was, a muscular young fellow, lithe and strong, alert and sinuous. He did not seem to be the same man who had gone into that dressing room. Yet he was still comical-looking, for he was much too large for the clothing he had put on.

Jack stared and Tom laughed when they beheld him.

"A trick on us, by gravy, that is!" grumbled Jubal. "That feller ain't no tramp, and never has been, nuther. Lee's fooled us, and has got a reg'lar perfessional football player on his rush line, b'jings, an' I'm bettin' a dollar on it!"

All the other fellows were staring. Even little Nat Kimball was sure he would not be afraid of contracting germs now, if he should by any chance run against the fellow who had given the name of Weary Watson.

"We might have known he wasn't a regular tramp, by the name he gave," said Brodie, scowling blackly again. "Would a regular tramp call himself Weary anything? I don't think it."

"Yet it's too late to back out now," Jack responded. "You fellows voted to let Lee Sheldon put him on the Highland rush line."

"I didn't," said Brodie, grimly. "I never vote to let anything that is in opposition to me have a chance to strengthen itself. When you get the opposition down, hold 'em down. That's my belief. And that's the way to win football games."

And Jack felt that in this Brodie was right. Cranford had weakened the Highland rush line, and so had

paved the way to the sure winning of the game. Then, why should they let Highland strengthen its line in this way? But the thing had been done.

"I guess we're easy!" Jack remarked, in an aside to Tom.

CHAPTER X.

JASON LITTLEFIELD MAKES A TACKLE.

There had been a change of goals, Cranford now having that on the south for the second half of the game, and being thus favored by the wind.

Lee Sheldon kicked off for Highland, making a great kick that drove the ball down to Cranford's ten-yard line.

Tom Lightfoot caught it and sent it back into Highland territory, to the forty-five-yard line.

Lee Sheldon fell on the ball here, and this was followed by a swift lineup.

When the two lines faced each other, with Weary Watson in the position of right guard, it was seen how much larger and taller he was than any player on the Cranford line. He was taller than Wilson Crane, and he weighed even more than Lafe Lampton by a good fifty pounds.

There was a wide grin of pleasure on his hairy face.

"Wow!" he squalled. "Now we git into it!"

He humped his shoulders and crouched low for the jump at the Cranford line as soon as the ball was in motion. He was crouching just in front of Brodie Strawn, the Cranford left guard, and he was prepared to leap at Brodie.

The ball went back, and the Philistines smashed at Cranford.

There was a moment of tense straining, a swaying and reeling, as the lines heaved to and fro. Then the man with the ball went down, with several on top of him.

Weary alone had broken a line, pushing Brodie back with a strength that seemed irresistible.

"See here!" Brodie shouted, looking at him fiercely, when they had straightened up, "I think you used your hands to strike me then."

The tramp grinned a wide and amiable smile.

"Nit! Dat was my head. It's as hard as de heart of a farmer when you're at his back door axin' him fer pie."

"Don't do it again!" Brodie ordered, angrily.

"Nit—I won't. But recklect dat I'm goin' t'rough you like a hungry man t'rough a picnic dinner—see? I'm ready fer youse!"

Again Highland smashed against the Cranford line like a sea wave beating against a ledge. Again that swaying and heaving followed; then Brodie went down, on his back, and Lee Sheldon, with the ball, went through the hole which the tramp and those with him had made in Cranford's rush line.

Lee found himself opposed by Jubal Marlin, who tried to cut him off and make a tackle.

Sheldon spun round, to dive away from Jubal, and in the movement slipped and let the ball shoot out of his hands.

The Cranford boys were bearing down on Sheldon, with the Highland Philistines trying to hold them back.

But Jubal had the ball, and dodging round the end he ran like a fire in dry grass, heading for the Highland goal line.

Mat Foster, however, was in front, and he came at Jubal, pitching himself forward and making a beautiful tackle, and Jubal went down, with the ball under him.

All the spectators were cheering, and some crying out "Tackle!"

At the same instant old Jason Littlefield rushed upon the field. He had seen Jubal running like the wind and dodging, and he, too, had started in pursuit of that lively young Yankee.

He heard the people yell "tackle" even before Foster threw himself at Jubal's twinkling legs.

"I snum, I'll tackle him!" he howled; and then, as Jubal went down, falling prostrate, with Foster hanging to his legs, the old farmer threw himself forward, catching Jubal round the shoulders.

He bumped Jubal's head against the ground and camped down right on top of him.

"Dod gast ye, I've got ye!" he squalled. "Run away with my wife's pocketbook, will ye? And sneak down into my kitchen and git a pie and eat it, will ye? Oh, I've got ye, and ye needn't wiggle!"

Jubal struggled to get on his feet, clinging to the ball.

The other players rushed up.

Brodie Strawn, catching Littlefield roughly by the collar jerked him from Jubal, and the old man, spinning round, fell sprawling.

When he got on his feet he was white with rage.

"I snum," he howled, "to be treated this way by a lot o' lazy football players! By jacks, I ain't goin' to stand it!"

He began to peel off his long-tailed coat.

Lee Sheldon had drawn back, his face flushed with something more than the violent exercise.

"What are you doing here?" Jack demanded of Littlefield.

Jubal got up, sputtering, but still clinging to the ball.

"He stole my wife's pocketbook!" fumed Littlefield, shaking his finger at Jubal.

"I didn't, nuther!" Jubal shouted, indignantly.

"Wa'n't you at my haouse last night an' this mornin'?"

"But I never seen yeou're gol-darned old pocket-book."

"I been lookin' fer him," said Littlefield, thinking now that perhaps an explanation was due, "and now that I've got him he's goin' with me straight to jail, er fork over that pocketbook."

"Ask him to cough up the pie, too!" said Brodie, with grim humor.

"He's swallowed the pie, drat him; but he's got the pocketbook, an' I want it."

"I ain't, nuther!" protested Jubal, sturdily.

The spectators were roaring. They understood that bit of comedy to a certain extent, and they were simply bursting with laughter. Most of them knew Littlefield for an old skinflint.

Now the referee and the other officials came up, with some police officers.

"Get out of here!" said the referee to Littlefield. "This game's got to go on."

"I'm goin' to have that pocketbook!" Littlefield sputtered.

"You can settle that after the game's over. Players, get to your places!"

Then the other officials and the police hustled the indignant farmer off the gridiron; but he went fuming, declaring that he'd have the "pocketbook" or he'd have the life of the thief that took it.

Weary Watson heard and saw all this with a queer smile. The pocketbook was in a pocket of the clothing he had on.

CHAPTER XI.

WILSON CRANE'S GREAT TACKLE.

The game was on again, with Jason Littlefield now but one of the spectators.

Jubal had been tackled and downed on Highland's twenty-five-yard line, and there the lineup came.

Cranford had the ball, and bucked the line.

Jack, with the ball, broke through the hole made in the left guard of Highland. He dodged Sol Russell, the left tackle. Jubal swung in from the left end and ran at Jack's side. But Lee Sheldon was there, and the ball went down; but not until Jack advanced it to the fifteen-yard line.

Cranford tried now to take it through again, but made the mistake of striking the right tackle of Highland for the advance.

The tramp was the right guard, and his powerful weight and strength held the line there like a stone wall.

"Nit!" he yelled, as he held the line.

Again Cranford tried to break through, swinging toward the other end. But the tramp hurdled over Brodie, and with a flying leap, in which he spread himself out like a flying squirrel, he came at Jack, just as Jack had cleared the line, and brought him down with as neat a tackle as had been seen on that field.

Cranford, in two attempts, had advanced the ball but three yards.

Jack dropped back for a quick kick, and tried to drive the ball across the Highland goal line; but, with a great leap, the tramp went into the air, much as if he had been shot up by steel springs, and he stopped the ball there, falling on it instantly.

"By granny, he's a professional," said Jubal, "and I knowed he was!"

Highland began to buck Cranford's line now, the ball going to the right half-back, who jumped to the side of the tramp; and the latter, with the heavy center by his side, plowed a hole through the line, carrying the half-back through with the ball.

This was so good that the Highland quarter-back again sent the half-back with the ball into that same hole.

Jack threw his strength and weight into the opposition; and with Brodie the others tried to hold the tramp. It was like trying to hold a steam engine. His powerful shoulders flung them aside, and again the ball went through.

This time the half-back cleared the line and started for a run.

The tramp was by his side, shouldering the opposition out of the way. They passed Bob Brewster and Jubal Marlin, hurling them aside.

Jack Lightfoot swung into the pursuit, with Wilson Crane right behind him. Both Jack and Wilson could run as fast as the tramp, and faster than the half-back who had the ball.

Jack gained on the half-back, and while the tramp was elbowing a would-be tackler out of the way, Jack pitched himself forward.

The half-back, in breaking through the line, had bagged down the top of his right stocking. Jack's outstretched fingers caught in that bagging top, and the half-back came to the ground like a falling tree.

Yet he had, with the tramp's aid, made a magnificent burst, and had gained twenty yards.

In the next scrimmage the ball, while seeming to be sent to the half-back, was lodged in the hands of the tramp, who had leaped back as if to get out of Brodie's way.

Then he smashed Brodie and Bob Brewster, and cleared the line like a jumper going over a hurdle.

Before half the Cranford boys knew that the half-back was not in possession of the ball, Weary Watson was flying with it toward Cranford's goal posts.

They were more than seventy-five yards away, yet he had cleared the field and seemed to have straight sailing before him.

But as he thus shot away Wilson Crane rose out of the ruck and wild mix-up, and stretching out his long neck set his long legs in motion.

When Wilson ran at his best, and he began to do that right from the jump, his slim legs moved like the speeding legs of a running ostrich.

A wild and excited yell rose from the Cranford enthusiasts, when they saw Wilson stretch out in that way after the tramp. They rose to their feet, swinging hats and handkerchiefs and cheering at the top of their lungs.

The tramp seemed to be going like an express train, but he could not run with Wilson, who could, in a straight-away race like this, beat even Jack Lightfoot.

Yard by yard Wilson gained on Weary Watson. The latter, hearing the quick thud of nearing feet, glanced over his shoulder, and tried to make a new burst of speed.

The goal line of Cranford was nearing, seeming almost to be thrown at the runners.

The tramp exerted himself now to the utmost, resolved to cross the line.

But when within five yards of it Wilson threw himself for a straight-ahead tackle, a most difficult feat. Wilson's long arms shot out toward the twinkling legs of the tramp. They struck Weary's thighs and slipped to his knees, from his knees to his ankles, and there they held like hooks of steel.

The tramp went forward on his face, falling so heavily that for a few moments the very breath was knocked out of him.

Then how the Cranford rooters screamed their joy. It was worth traveling from Cranford to Highland just to hear them.

Wilson had made one of the greatest tackles ever seen in any play in the Four-Town League.

The Cranford spectators were howling with joy; and from all round the gridiron there came a wild roar of applause, for even in games played by the crack teams of the country a more beautiful tackle is seldom seen.

The Highland eleven was filled with a mad enthusiasm.

In the past, Jack Lightfoot had had much trouble with Wilson Crane, who was sometimes reckless and rebellious. Yet Jack had always appreciated the good points in Wilson, and could admire a fine play, no matter who made it.

So now, while that thrill of pride and exultation swept like a wave over the gridiron and everybody was cheering, Jack threw his arms round Wilson's lanky shoulders.

"That was great—great!" he cried, patting Wilson affectionately. "Cranford's proud of you to-day!"

And in that moment, while his own heart was swelling with the full tide of victory, Wilson was able to forgive Jack for all the wrongs, fancied or otherwise, which he held against him.

"Wilson, you're all right!" said Lafe. "If I didn't know you'd refuse it, I'd offer you an apple as a reward. I couldn't have done better myself."

He laughed, showing his white teeth, while his sky-blue eyes were dancing with delight.

Weary Watson had picked himself up.

At first he was frowning; then his hairy face widened in a smile, as he looked about.

"Whose givin' me de glad hand?" he asked, jocularly. "Didn't I run about as fast as he did? Den why don't you t'row some o' dem bouquets dis way, an' weep on me shoulder?"

There was no further time for "bouquets" for anyone.

Time was flying, and the game must go on.

Weary Watson had the ball, on Cranford's five-yard line.

Lee Sheldon believed they could drive it through Cranford for a touch-down, and it seemed a safe conclusion now, with so powerful a man as Weary on the rush line of the Philistines.

So the Philistines bucked the line.

"Hold 'em!" Jack screamed in desperation, and he used his own strength to back up the swaying and shivering line, which reeled like a fence struck by a high wind, when the Philistines came against it.

Weary had the ball; but Jack pulled him down, as he went over the head of Bob Brewster.

The gain was but a yard.

Again Highland bucked the line; and again, filled with such wild desperation that their strength seemed increased tenfold, the Cranford boys held them.

The gain had been two yards.

Lee Sheldon seemed for a moment undecided.

He had believed that the tramp could go through the Cranford line, and it seemed safe to try for the two yards which alone remained between them and the goal line. The goal posts rose almost over their head.

Yet—he knew it might be wiser to drop back for a kick.

There was no time for hesitation.

He chose to try to make the two yards by bucking the line, giving the ball to Weary Watson.

Watson struck the line like a charging mad bull. But Jack knew now that the ball would go to Watson; and he and Tom and Phil Kirtland were right at the point where Watson tried to climb and plow through.

"T'rough wit' it!" yelled Watson.

"Hold 'em!" Jack fairly screamed.

The contending players seemed to rise into the air, as they swayed against each other.

"T'rough wit' it!" yelled Watson, with his shoulders down and the ball hugged to his breast.

But he went down, in spite of his herculean attempt, and the Cranford boys were piling on him.

The ball was down, right under the shadow of the goal posts, and it was now Cranford's ball.

Lee Sheldon had made his choice and his attempt, and had failed.

It is always easier afterward to say that the other thing would have been the proper thing. Lee thought that now; but still he could not be sure.

Cranford had the ball, in the scrimmage lineup that followed.

If Wilson Crane had not been so blown from his recent run Jack would have had Wilson run with it, as quarter-back, which the new rules allow under certain restrictions.

Wilson swung the ball to Phil Kirtland, at the same time making a puzzling pass, as if giving the ball to Jack.

Jack jumped toward Weary Watson, as if trying to go through there, or through right tackle; while Kirtland jumped toward the left end of the Philistines.

Kirtland broke through the left end, with strong interference, and, clearing the mob, started down the field.

Weary held Jack and the other Cranford players who threw themselves at him; while the right end of the Philistines swung in, with the Philistine full-back, and come down on Phil.

The full-back made a jumping tackle, and Phil went down, with the ball under him.

But he had gained nearly fifteen yards in that sharp run.

The ball was well away from the danger section now; and, being in Cranford's possession, they felt they could keep it away.

Again they bucked the line, and Phil again took the ball through, finding that same hole, for five yards more.

CHAPTER XII.

LITTLEFIELD BUTTS IN AGAIN.

Another member of the Philistine rush line had been knocked out and lay on the ground groaning.

The referee gave time for putting in a substitute.

Lee Sheldon signaled to one of his waiting men.

At this juncture, while this little wait was being allowed, and Weary Watson was taking advantage of it to stretch himself for a moment on the grass, Farmer Littlefield, who had been struggling in the hands of some men who were trying to keep him off the gridiron, broke away from them and came running toward the tired players.

He rushed up to Weary Watson, and lifted him in the side with his heavy boot.

"What d'ye say to this?" he demanded. "Here's that pocketbook with the money in it!"

Weary pulled his cap down over his eyes and wrinkled his face in a wide grin, as he turned to the irate farmer.

"Keep them mud scows off'n me!" he urged. "What was it youse was chirpin'?"

"Here's that pocketbook, with the money in it!"

Weary looked a bit surprised, but contrived rather well to hide it.

"Say, yer in luck! Goin' ter give dat to me? T'anks!"

He held out his hand for it.

Littlefield jerked the pocketbook away.

"Gol-darn ye, can't you understand nothin'? No, I ain't goin' to give it to ye! But explain haow you got it?"

The tramp sat up.

All the players were now staring.

The men who had been holding Littlefield were walking out upon the gridiron as if for the purpose of taking him out again.

He waved them away.

"Naw, I ain't goin'!" he shouted. "This is some-thin' more important than football."

He faced Weary Watson.

"When you fell a while ago, with that other feller hangin' to ye—that long, lean feller, ye know!—you dropped this pocketbook. Naow, haow in thunder did you come to have it? That's what I want explained."

Weary seemed to become more interested.

"Chee!" he cried. "If it fell out of my pocket den it's mine, ain't it? Hand it over 'ere."

"Nary time. You don't git it. But I want it explained. How'd you come by it? Which one of them fellers give it to you?"

He pointed to Jubal and Lee Sheldon.

"One o' them fellers stole it aout of my house, b'jings! An' which one was it? If you don't answer I'll have all three o' ye up afore the jedge, by hoky, and send the hull caboodle to jail. I snum, I ain't goin'——"

"Well, you *are* going!"

One of the men caught him by the shoulders and began to jerk him along out of the gridiron.

"But I want this thing explained!" he howled. "Here's that pocketbook, and——"

But the substitute was in position, time had expired, and the game must go on.

The ball was in possession of Cranford, and down on her twenty-yard line.

The teams lined up, with the Philistines feverishly and nervously watching their adversaries.

The pigskin was passed back by Connie, with a swift motion.

Wilson had called no signals.

He made a pass, as if swinging the ball to Jack, and Jack pretended to run with it, putting his head down and hugging the imaginary ball to his breast, while he dived for the right end of the Philistines' line.

At the same moment Wilson ran his five yards to the right, and then plowed into the hole made there by those Cranford heavy men—Lafe Lampton and Saul Messenger.

Saul was not so heavy as Lafe, but he had a certain bulldog, fierce determination about him that made him a great man on the rush line; and with him and Lafe was Reel Snodgrass, who was playing now for Cranford as if he had never had a thought of evil against any Cranford boy.

Reel had wanted to play football, and he was trying hard to fill his place to the satisfaction of all the other players.

Wilson went through this hole, being fairly hurled and pushed through it, while Jack was making that feint of trying to go through the Philistines' right.

Wilson cleared the line.

But again the Philistine full-back and left half-back had held back, and they came at Wilson for a tackle.

He tried to dodge them, leaping like a greyhound; but as he made his leap the full-back caught him by the ankle, and Wilson came down heavily, having advanced the ball but five yards.

Yet the gain had been something.

In the next quick lineup—all working feverishly and hurriedly, for they knew that time was flying—the ball went to Jack.

Again those powerful fellows—Lafe Lampton and Saul Messenger, aided by Reel Snodgrass—tore a hole in the Philistine line.

They were hammering the weak spot in the line made by putting in the new substitute, who was an inferior player.

Jack broke through the line, hurdling it, and with Reel Snodgrass, Lafe Lampton and Phil Kirtland run-

ning with him for interference, he started at a great clip for the Highland goal line, a long distance away.

Weary Watson rose out of the ruck of players, shaking the Cranford men loose, and started in wild pursuit.

Two Cranford players opposed him, and they went over before his rush like pins struck down in a bowling alley.

Weary Watson tore on across the gridiron, with other Philistine runners closing in with him.

Jack had very little start, and it was seen that Watson would crowd him hard.

The spectators rose in their seats, and all round the gridiron there was a swinging of hats and caps, and wild yelling.

The race for goal was on, and it was hot.

Seeing himself becoming short-winded, Lafe Lampton threw himself in Watson's way, to stop him.

Watson went over him, like a leaper taking hurdles.

But it broke Watson's high speed; and before he could gather himself again Jack had gained perceptibly.

Again Watson rushed on, running even more rapidly, it seemed, than when he was pursued by Wilson Crane.

But, next to Wilson, Jack was the best runner in Cranford.

He drew away from both Phil and Reel, and was soon running alone.

These two now opposed Watson.

He threw them aside, and dashed on after Jack.

But Jack was now gaining on him. Watson was not the runner Wilson was, though he was marvelously fast; and, therefore, he could not come up with Jack for a tackle; and Jack, after a wonderful burst of speed, crossed the goal line for a touch-down.

The whistle blew. The time was up.

It was a close call.

There was not even time left to make the kick for goal.

But Cranford had won the game.

The score was—Cranford, eleven; Highland, six.

Highland, aided by the tramp, had certainly played a great game of football that day, and Cranford had won by the narrowest margin.

Weary Watson stretched himself to his full height,

just after the whistle sounded, and, lifting his right hand, swung his cap round his head, while his wide mouth expanded in an ear-splitting yell:

"Yee-ee-ow! Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

Highland had been a hard nut to crack that day.

CHAPTER XIII.

WEARY WATSON REVEALS HIMSELF.

Again Jason Littlefield came running on the field, with no one now to stop his advance.

He came rushing up to the tramp, waving the pocket-book.

"What about this 'ere pockitbook?" he was screeching. "I ain't had that explained yit, an' I want to know abaout it."

The tramp turned to him, with a wide smile wrinking his hairy face.

"Wot's dat youse sayin'?"

"This pockitbook! Where'd you git this pockit-book?"

The tramp planted his sturdy legs apart and stared at the little pocketbook.

"Well, may I be et up by rattlesnakes, if I don't b'lieve I have seen dat pocketbook before! It looks natcherel, anyhow."

"Where'd you git it?"

Many people were streaming out upon the gridiron, to witness this little comedy.

"Where'd I git it? Why, where it was t' be found!"

"It was behint the clock, at home."

"Dere's where I found it."

Littlefield stared at him in stupefaction.

Then he turned toward the crowd.

"Off'cers, come an' 'rest this man! He says he's the thief."

He turned back to the tramp.

"You took it?"

"Sure t'ing—I took it."

"How'd you git intew the house? What right had ye to go intew my house, robbin' me?"

The tramp folded his arms across his broad breast and broke into a loud laugh.

That laugh made Littlefield look at him more closely.

"Why, pop," Weary yelled, "don't ye know yer pore little wanderin' boy?"

Then he caught the old man up, lifting him from the ground, and swung him round.

"Whoop! Don't ye know yer boy? I'm little Ezra Littlefield, yer hopeful, only son that run away from home 'cause you didn't want him to play football—only I've growed, ye see, till ye don't know me any more."

He dropped Littlefield, and the latter spun round, bringing up with a jerk.

"Ye don't mean it?" he said, coming up to the big fellow, who stood grinning before him.

"Pop, I do! I'm little Ezra. I told the captain of this team who I was, and that I belonged here and used to play football in the eleven here, and that's why he wanted to put me into his rush line. I rushed 'em, dad, didn't I?"

He had dropped his tramp dialect.

Again he caught his father in a wild hug.

"What's yours is mine, ain't it, pop? And so I stole my own money—see? But you can have it. I'm goin' home with you, pop; and I'm goin' to be yer good, little boy frum this straight on. Football is all right, pop, only you didn't used to think so. Git over thinkin' it ain't, fer it's a bad habit."

Ten minutes later Weary Watson had shifted back into his ragged clothing; and, with his arm round old Jason Littlefield's neck, was walking with him toward the buggy which had brought Littlefield to town.

"When you come huntin' fer ma's pocketbook, you found yer boy, pop, an' that's a fact!" he cried.

Then he turned, just before reaching the buggy, and waved his hand to the people on and about the gridiron.

And as he did so, a yell broke from his lips:

"Yee-ow! Hoo-raw fer Highland!"

THE END.

Next week's issue, No. 42, will be "Jack Lightfoot's Flying Wedge; or, How Kirtland Won the Game for Cranford." This is another rattling football story, with something doing from start to finish. You are sure to like it.

HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 14, "How to Become a Batter." No. 15, "The Science of Place Hitting and Bunting." No. 16, "How to Cover First Base." No. 17, "Playing Shortstop." No. 18, "Pitching." No. 19, "Pitching Curves." No. 20, "The Pitcher's Team Work." No. 21, "Playing Second Base." No. 22, "Covering Third Base." No. 23, "Playing the Outfield." No. 24, "How to Catch." (I.) No. 25, "How to Catch." (II.) No. 26, "How to Run Bases." No. 27, "Coaching and the Coach." No. 28, "How to Umpire." No. 29, "How to Manage Players." No. 30, "Baseball Points." No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse." No. 35, "The Boy With a Hobby for Collecting." No. 36, "Football, and How to Play It." No. 37, "A Practice Game." No. 38, "How to Play Football—Training." No. 39, "The Men in the Line." No. 40, "The Men Behind."

SIGNAL SYSTEMS.

The closing paragraphs of our talk last week touched briefly on signals and their importance. How important these are there is no need of telling boys who have probably been playing the game the last eight or ten weeks; but since the season is not much more than half over, some further consideration of the various signal systems will be of a good deal of help to you.

As has been stated frequently before, these talks find place in ALL-SPORTS, not to tell you how to play football, but to give suggestions to boys who already know something of this fascinating game by actual playing and want to improve themselves. Such boys will welcome new ideas on any point in playing, and the following suggestions in regard to signals will certainly help in rounding out the team for those final contests for school, town or country championships.

Signal systems are composed of either letters or numbers, or both. These letters, or numbers, usually indicate players and the intervals between the men on the line, but sometimes indicate plays also. Many teams are taking up the latter system this year, owing to its extreme simplicity. Combination plays are restricted in number, and it is quite possible to comprehend every play that can be made in the game in a few numbers or a few letters. The system, however, has many obvious disadvantages; it is one of the easiest in the world to tumble to, for one thing, unless a constantly shifting key is used, and a constantly shifting key may at any time bring about a condition of things where every man will be wondering what he is at.

For another reason, this system is not one to be adopted without having its usefulness proved by hard experience. Let us say that C indicates full-back and that E indicates the interval in the line between guard and tackle on the same side of center. When this signal is given C learns that he is to run with the ball, and E tells him that he is to go through the line between guard and tackle. Guard and tackle hear the half-back called on to take the ball, and the next letter tells them that they must get busy.

From personal experience, the writer believes that this double warning starts men into quicker action than the other system, whereby the letter E would indicate that the half-back was to buck through at the same point. It can happen that the signal system is not understood and that the half may rush for the opening which has not

been properly made for him. Whereas, if the men on either side of that interval hear themselves called on for work they are not likely to waste any time guessing.

Of course this reasoning may seem somewhat foolish to some of you, the possibility of confusion being slight; but the whole question is one of how the tired man's mind works. Some of us congratulate ourselves on being able to wake up at any time in the morning by merely repeating to ourselves as we drop off to sleep the hour at which we wish to wake up. I prefer an alarm clock; it's not so apt to fail. It's the same way with signals. A perfectly drilled team may pull through all right on the play-signal system, but general experience goes to prove that the man-signal system works better. It's like an alarm clock. It wakes the right men up.

Let us illustrate this by further consideration of signal systems, taking first a number system.

In this case every man on the team, and every interval in the line, has its number. On a sheet of paper put down a number of marks to indicate the position of the players of a team having the ball just before the ball is put into play. No. 1 will be full-back; No. 2 will be left half; No. 3 will be right half; No. 4 will be quarter; No. 5 will be left end; 6, left tackle; 7, left guard; center has no number; 8, 9 and 10 will be, respectively, right guard, right tackle and right end. The spaces are numbered in the opposite direction. No. 1 will indicate around the right end; 2, between right end and right tackle; 3, between right tackle and guard; 4, between right guard and center; 5, between center and left guard; 6, between left guard and left tackle; 7, between left tackle and left end, and 8, around left end. Suppose the play is to send right half around left end. The quarter gives his signal somewhat in this style: "Four hundred, ninety-nine, *thirty-eight*, eighty-six—" The key number is the third; the first part indicates the player—right half-back; the second where he is to go, eight around left end.

A letter system may be selected as follows: The words "HUSTLING BAKE" are selected because there are no duplicates. H signifies around left end; U, between left end and left tackle; S, between left tackle and left guard; T, between left guard and center; L, between center and right guard; I, between right guard and right tackle; N, between right tackle and right end; G, about right end. B indicates the full-back; A, the left half; K, the right half, and E, the quarter. The signals are announced the same way, as in the case of numbers: "Oj, qv, *kh*, in—" The third combination is again the key, the first letter the player, the second the place of play.

The play-signal system is described by one of its champions, Fielding H. Yost, of Michigan, in his "Football," as follows: "Number the first play 'five,' the next 'six' and so on. For example, let 'five' and 'six' represent the play that will send the respective half-backs straight into the line from their regular positions. All even numbers will call for plays that go to the left of center, while all the odd numbers call for an attack on the right. The reverse, of course, is just as effective. Then continue to number the plays as follows: 'Seven,' full-back buck on the right of center; 'eight,' full-back to the left of center, and so on, to include all the varieties of attack that the team may learn through the season. The fol-

(Continued on page 30.)

A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

Here are my measurements. Please tell me if I am of a build to make an athlete. Of course I know it might be necessary for me to go through a course of manual training in order to harden my muscles and be able to do the many clever stunts athletes accomplish; but I want to make sure the foundation is all right before I begin to build. I am 16 years old and measure 5 feet 7 inches in my bare feet. My weight is 133 pounds, though it varies some according to the season, and I have gone as high as 141 in early spring. I suppose the fact of my going in so for rowing and various other vigorous sports pulls me down some during the warm months; but I don't care about that, as I seem to be as tough as nails through it all. Around the chest the tape shows 37 inches, normal. Hips are 35 inches; waist, 36 inches; thigh, 20 inches, and around the calf of leg, 14 inches. Hoping to see an answer to this in an early number, and thanking you for the same, I remain, yours truly,

KARL FLETCHER.

Yes, you are just about it, Karl. We fail to see where you can have any complaint coming. Indeed, you are so close to the general average for a young athlete of your height that it would be folly for us to offer any advice. Continue to do as you are doing and all must be well. And we venture the prediction that you are not the lad to risk losing the sound health you now enjoy by allowing a taste for liquor or tobacco to overcome your principles.

Will you please tell the author of the Lightfoot stories that the boys out here are simply dead stuck on his breezy style? I claim some credit for it, because it was through me they got to first reading ALL-SPORTS. I had a copy sent to me by my Cousin Joe in St. Louis, and I liked it so well I had our agent send for some. He tells me he has increased his order three times. How is that for high? And more than that, when I'm through with a copy I mail it to some fellow I know further West. I just reckon it's a welcome visitor on the cattle ranges, and I can shut my eyes and see the fellows sitting around the grub wagon of an evening, tired to death with riding all day, but head over ears interested in the doings of Jack Lightfoot and his pards. I shouldn't wonder but that more than a few of the cow men have donated scrip to your cash department for back numbers. That was what I did, all right. Those stories are hustlers, and they've got all others beat to a finish. But I'll pull leather right here, and rope myself before I land in that wastebasket. So long, Mr. Editor. Don't forget to give my best to the writer.

"HUCKLEBERRY FINN."

Wichita, Kan.

You are certainly a breezy customer, and a hustler from the word "Go." If we had an honor roll, your name, if you cared to give it, would head the list. Here's hoping your cowboy friends may long enjoy the breezy tales concerning the fortunes of Jack Lightfoot, and that they may profit by the example of good American grit and honest dealing he sets them.

Jack and the rest seem so natural to me that, do you know, I'm tempted to ask you whether there's really any chance of their coming down this way during the winter? I'd like to meet the whole bunch first rate, and if they landed here, I promise you the club I belong to, and which, by the way, is called the All-Sports Club, would entertain them royally. Do please induce them to wander this way if they visit Dixie land.

Atlanta, Ga.

GEORGE ALTROSS.

If the Cranford boys go South and happen to land in Atlanta during their trip, you will surely hear of it. They certainly must appreciate your kind intentions, and would send thanks. You evidently read the Lightfoot stories in the only way whereby the utmost enjoyment can be gotten from anything, by giving your whole heart and soul to the pursuit of the hour. And doubtless you believe in the old, tried and true maxim, that if it's worth while doing a thing at all it's worth while doing it well.

I cannot wait any longer to express my opinion in regard to ALL-SPORTS. That fine weekly is IT. I have read all the numbers from 1 to the present issue, and I intend to read all that will be published in the future. Mr. Stevens is a "cracker-jack," and seems to know just what boys like and how to tell it in a manner that is fascinating. Jack is my ideal for an up-to-date American lad, and Lafe, Tom, Ned, Jubal, Wilson, Nat, and even Phil and Brodie, are friends worth having. Jubal is one of my favorites, even if he is a little wild at times, and he has made me laugh many a time, "by granny." Miss Nellie Connor is my favorite girl, although Kate is all right. It seems to me that you are a little hard on "jiu-jitsu," as most everyone I know seems to approve of it.

The following are my measurements: Age, just 15 years; height, 5 feet 1 inch; weight, 100 pounds, exactly; chest, normal, 30 inches; contracted, 28 inches; expanded, 32½ inches; neck, 13½ inches; waist, 26 inches; thigh, 18 inches; calf, 12 inches; wrist, 6¼ inches; forearm, 9 inches; biceps, 9½ inches. These were, of course, taken when stripped. How are they? Wishing long life to ALL-SPORTS,

A LOYAL READER.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Your measurements are very good, indeed, and if you take a fair amount of exercise, we should imagine that you must be in fine physical condition. Your words of praise in connection with our publication are thoroughly appreciated.

Having read every number of ALL-SPORTS up to the present number, I thought I would like to express my opinion of the publication. I like Jack Lightfoot and his friends, but I am disgusted with Reel Snodgrass and Delancy Shelton. I want to ask a few questions. I am fourteen years old, and can run five miles slowly, but cannot go sixty yards with speed. Can you tell what causes this? I am a very poor athlete in other respects. I would like to correspond with Jack Lightfoot the Second.

3026 Third Avenue, New York City.

WM. SCHWARTZ.

The trouble is you attempt too much. It is necessary to get there slowly. Run the sixty yards at a pace you can stand, and gradually increase it. In various ways you can build yourself up so that you will be able to claim the name of an athlete.

I want to put it up to you whether I am mean or not? A couple of fellows I go with kept borrowing my copy of ALL-SPORTS every week, and seem to like the stories about as much as I do, which is saying a good lot, I tell you. Now, I wouldn't object to passing a good thing along if it was anything else but the paper I'm so fond of. You see, I'm keeping every copy from No. 1, intending to have them bound, twenty-six to a volume. I want to do this because on rainy holidays and winter evenings I'm fond of rooting back and reading things that particu-

larly struck my fancy at the time they appeared. Now, several times when these friends returned my copy it was all tattered and soiled from being in their pockets. I hate to have anyone think I'm a "crank," but what can I do? I had to send and buy three new copies in order to have my file look decent. That wasn't fair. The boys are just as able to invest five cents a week as I am. They got mad when I told them I wasn't going to lend out my ALL-SPORTS any more. Please advise me.

Petersburg, Va.

A YOUNG VIRGINIAN.

We commend your course. Your boy friends are certainly unreasonable. When you had loaned them one copy it was time your missionary work in that quarter came to an end. They know why you wish to preserve your file, and it is very mean in them calling you a crank on that account. Do not fear but that they will sooner or later invest their own nickels in copies of your favorite paper, and it will possibly arouse their ambition to have a neat file of back numbers for reference.

Having read, in some late numbers of your weekly, letters from certain readers, in connection with the fitness of Phil Kirtland to be a leader among the Cranford boys, I've found myself urged to drop you these few lines and ventilate my views on the subject. Now, I like Phil Kirtland as well as anyone, but I know that in stories of this sort, dealing week after week with about the same cast of characters, there must be one who is leader. It is so in real life, and one doesn't have to be very smart to see such a thing. Kirtland is good—but Lightfoot is better. He has proved the truth of this on numerous occasions when they battled for honors, and almost invariably Jack won out. Besides this, Jack always won his honors decently, and to this day there is no such thing as a slur cast upon his right to be leader. Phil has considerable to learn before he dare attempt any stunts. I hope and expect, however, to see quite a fine character developed in Kirtland, because, like those who have complained, I can see elements cropping up in his nature that indicate his capacity for accomplishing things. He is such a fine all-round fellow that, given the chance, he will make a splendid second to our hero. Only Kirtland must learn, once for all, that the man or boy who aspires to conquer other things must first begin to overcome his own weakness, whatever that may be.

WALTER R. SILSBEE.

Providence, R. I.

What you have to say is direct and to the point, Walter. We believe pretty much as you do. Kirtland will have his chance soon, and let us hope he may avail himself of it.

Being a constant reader of ALL-SPORTS, I take the liberty to ask you a few questions. My measurements are: Weight, 109 pounds; height, 5 feet 4½ inches; chest, normal, 30 inches; expanded, 33 inches; waist, 28 inches; thigh, 17½ inches; calf, 12 inches; wrist, 6 inches; biceps, 10 inches. 1. How are my measurements? 2. How can I strengthen my wrist and ankles? I have a punching bag, dumb-bells and Indian clubs. Do you think these will be enough to make an athlete of me? I close, with three cheers for Jack, Tom and Lafe,

WALTER MELINS.

Troy, N. Y.

1. You are lacking a couple of inches in chest measurements and are about the same number of inches too large about the waist. Systematically train, in order to enlarge your lungs. Your appetite, we take it, is all right.

2. The bag and dumb-bells will strengthen arms and wrists in fine shape. From these you can, by degrees, go to other things.

Count me in as an admirer of Jack Lightfoot. I have read pretty much all of Henty's books, as well as those of Optic, Alger and Castleman, and while I certainly did enjoy many of the stories that quartet of great authors wrote, to my mind no character created by any one among them can quite come up to Jack. He's so natural, you know, a fellow comes to believe in him; and I sometimes have trouble convincing myself the Cranford boys are not a group I've known personally. And that is the whole charm of the thing. Jack is not perfect like some heroes. He can't do everything better than others. And he has faults like the rest of us, which he fights hard to down. Long may he wave. Mr. Publisher. I would pay five times

the present price of ALL-SPORTS if I couldn't get my copy in any other way. Remember me to the "King of Juvenile Story Writers,"

ASA BURCHALL.

Washington, D. C.

You are certainly an enthusiastic friend of ALL-SPORTS, and such letters do much to buoy up the spirits of the editor, who feels at times a bit uncertain when guiding the ship of state. We firmly believe boys admire stories in which living characters seem to figure, instead of wooden images jerked by the author to make various gestures; and Mr. Stevens is known to excel in the art of introducing *human interest* into his work. That is the secret of his popularity, just as the artist becomes famous who can best catch the individuality of the person whose portrait he is immortalizing on canvas.

(*"How to do Things"*)—Continued from page 28.

lowing illustrates how the plan may be used: 'Three'—Left half cross-bucks outside right tackle. 'Four'—Right half cross-bucks outside left tackle. 'Five'—Right half straight ahead. 'Six'—Left half straight ahead. 'Seven'—Full-back bucks center on the right. 'Eight'—Full-back bucks center on the left."

Mr. Yost calls this an easy and practical system, but tacitly admits that it can also be as clear as daylight to the opponents, and suggests that protection against discovery lies in the altering of the key. I would not advise any ALL-SPORTS football players to try that method of concealing the signals. It would probably be unexpectedly successful—it would mystify not only the opponents but the players themselves, and you remember, in our last issue, you were reminded how expensive it was for a man to forget the combination to his own safe.

Sequence plays, sometimes employed, are so called because one signal is sufficient for that play and the three or four following which have been arranged in sequence. Signals for these series consist usually of some phrase like: "Get together, fellows!" "Now for another five!" or something of this nature. The first play may be full-back through right guard and tackle; the moment the line is formed again, the quarter passes the ball without signals and right half goes around left end, and so on. These plays must be arranged after the team has got working well, and should be practiced so that they can be put through like chain lightning. Their whole effect depends on the suddenness and quickness of the work. You catch your opponents napping and gain ground on two scrimmages before they really wake up to what is happening. The absence of signals leaves them unprepared.

Signals should always be given in a plainly audible tone, and come quick. A slow quarter is a sure sign of a slow team; but if the man at the signal station talks and works quick, the whole team will follow suit. The men must be constantly drilled until they work like automata and the mere mention of the signal number starts every player going at his proper work instantly. There should never be an instant's hesitation and never a repetition of the signal. The signal is to be given once in a clear, decisive fashion, and on the second of its announcement the team should get to work. This means perfection of team play, which will form the subject of our next talk, and perfection of team play is the best claim on success any team can present. Work like a clock, work quick and work all together.

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